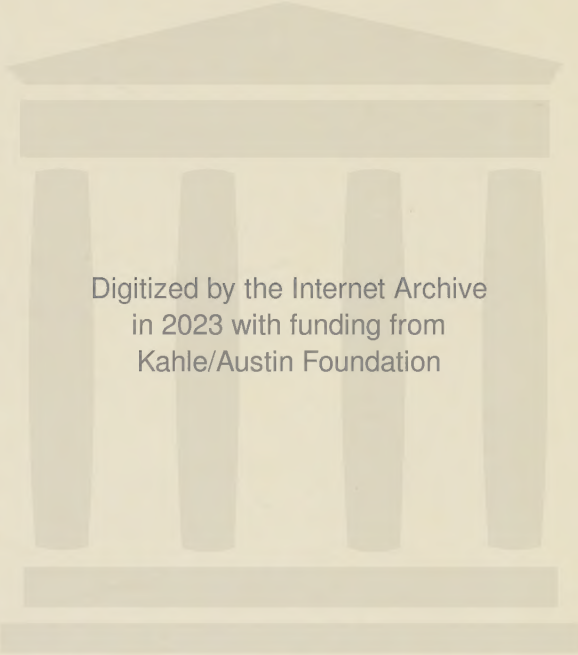
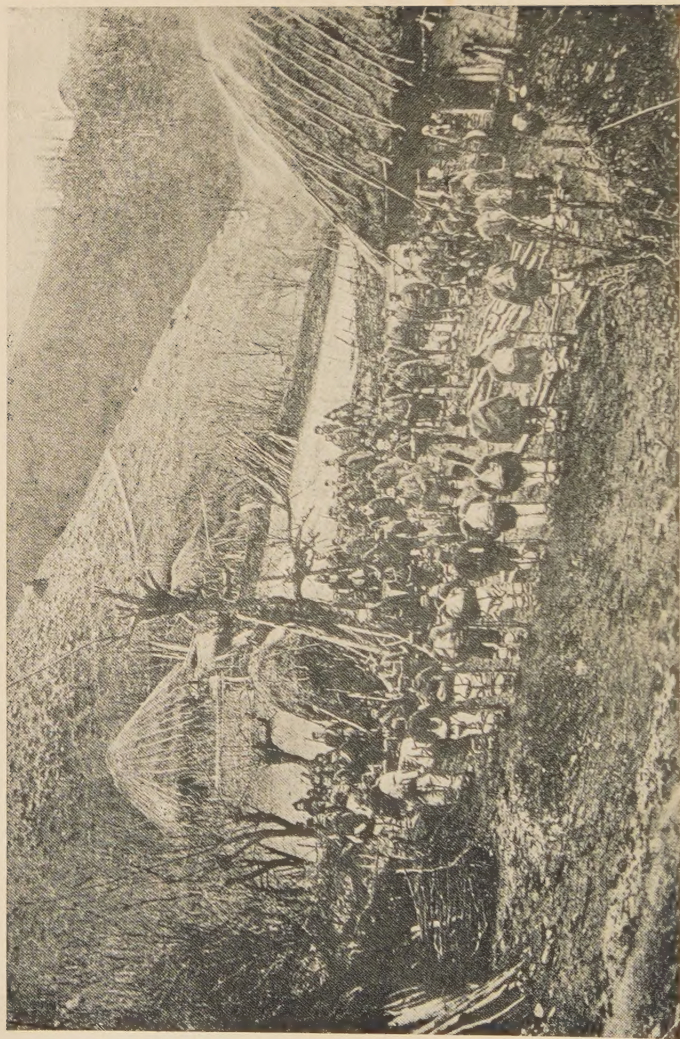




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A COUNCIL OF WAR IN A MOUNTAIN VILLAGE.

Fighting the Turk in the Balkans

An American's Adventures with the
Macedonian Revolutionists

By
owig 21200
Arthur D. Howden Smith

Illustrated

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BY

ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH

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TO
MY MOTHER

PREFACE

THIS work is not a history of political events. It is simply an endeavour to present a phase of our twentieth-century life which is unknown to most of us. At rare intervals, echoes of Balkan conflicts have reached America, humming over the cables at a rate per word that precluded details. In Europe, the struggle of the Macedonian insurgents was noted more closely, but even there, within a few hundred miles of the theatre of operations, there was a surprising ignorance of the warfare and the issues at stake. People knew that somewhere in European Turkey, a guerilla campaign was being waged by a race whom they vaguely imagined as half-brigands, half-outlaws. That was all.

Wholly aside from its bearing on contemporary history, the struggle of the Macedonian Bulgars, for liberty, was interesting, I think, because of its quaint setting, and its mingling of the barbaric colour of the East with the more sober tones of the West. Macedonia is the shadow of the Orient.

The passions, hatreds, loves, and shoutings of the East, and of the old-time West, can still be found within its borders.

In Macedonia, you see life in its elemental aspects, with the garments of convention thrown aside. Human beings pass for what they are worth. A magnate, who was a coward, would have short shrift with a brotherhood of chetniks. A man must be a man, to pass among them. Occasionally, under these circumstances, life is not pleasant. Ugly things crop out, and I have not ignored them. It has been my deliberate purpose to paint a true and accurate picture. So, if in any way I have offended delicate tastes, let that be my excuse.

In the pages that follow, I have pictured Macedonia as I saw it. I have tried to put in them the feelings of the chetnik life, with its wild surge of emotions, tense and over-strained. I have tried to portray the swift-moving procession of picturesque types that I met, each with a strange and distinctive individuality—brave women, Turkish askares, chetniks, priests, doctors, lawyers, peasants, white-kilted mountaineers, and vojvodes. And I have tried to picture, too, the land that was the stage for the drama, with its rugged, towering mountains, its dark ravines,

and the torrents that swept impetuously through them.

Macedonian conditions have changed somewhat in the few months that have passed since my return, but none can say what may take place in the future. Sudden shifts are the rule in the Balkans.

Certain of the succeeding chapters were printed originally in the New York *Evening Post*, and I take this opportunity of acknowledging the courtesy which has enabled me to make use of them again.

A. D. H. S.

BROOKLYN, N. Y.,
November, 1908.

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Fighting the Turk in the Balkans

INTRODUCTORY

IN this present stage of the world's development, we are given to considering the lives we lead prosaic. To a certain extent, perhaps, we are right. There are lacking the picturesqueness and the colour of the days and generations which have preceded us. We dress in tweeds, and life, in great cities, and even in the country, is better safe-guarded than it ever was in the high-walled castle of the fifteenth century. Policemen stride their beats before our doors, and burglar alarms make the night hideous, if daring house-breakers succeed in passing the minions of the law.

It is no wonder, then, that romance has in a measure passed from our lives, leaving a lingering fragrance, all the more cherished because of its

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rarity. Neither is it a matter for wonderment, that this fragrance cannot always be satisfying. Now and then, it becomes exasperating, and we set out in sudden resolve to find the body, of which it is an essence. The task may seem hopeless to those who have not pursued it; but let them not be cast down. In some far, lonesome corners of the earth, men and women still lead lives of romance, and the saga of their deeds proves that the spirit of the age of the paladins has not altogether vanished.

To those who have not visited them, the Balkans are a shadow-land of mystery; to those who know them, they become even more mysterious, for, as one begins to fancy he has peered under the veil, he finds himself caught in its meshes, and the spell of the land has him in thrall. You become, in a sense, a part of the spell, and of the mystery and glamour of the whole. You contract the habit of crouching over your morning coffee in the café, and, when you meet a man of your acquaintance, at least half of what you say is whispered, portentously. Intrigue, plotting, mystery, high courage, and daring deeds—the things that are the soul of true romance are to-day the soul of the Balkans.

I had always been interested in the Balkans,

particularly in Bulgaria and Macedonia, and when, in the fall of 1907, a chance was offered to me to go to Sofia and observe conditions at first-hand, I could not decline it. Naturally, one does not start on such an expedition as on the usual summer holiday. Letters of introduction were necessary, and I was carefully instructed in the personal phases of the insurrection, besides being given intimate side-lights on the characters of the prominent chiefs.

There were at the time three revolutions against the Turk raging in Macedonia—Bulgarian, Greek, and Servian. Of these the Bulgarian revolt was the most important and the one that was best known to the rest of the world. This was not extraordinary, because the Bulgarians undoubtedly form a majority of the Macedonian population. It has been computed that of about 4,000,000, they include 2,500,000.

It should be remembered, to begin with, that there is no Macedonian race, as a distinct type. Macedonians may belong to any of the races of Eastern Europe or Western Asia, as, indeed, they do. A Macedonian Bulgar is just the same as a Bulgar of Bulgaria proper, the old principality, that in October, 1908, at Tirnova, was proclaimed independent of Turkey. He looks the same, talks

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the same, and very largely, thinks the same way. In short, he is of the same stock. There is no difference, whatsoever, between the two branches of the race, except that the Macedonian Bulgars, as a result of their position under the Turkish government, have less culture and education than their northern brethren.

Independent Bulgaria is not a new country. At one time, in the thirteenth century, Bulgaria was one of the important states of Europe, and dominated the Balkans. During the Middle Ages she waxed powerful, but in 1393, at the bloody battle of Kossovo, "the plain of the blackbirds," Sultan Amurath overthrew the combined armies of Bulgaria and Servia, and from that time on, until the Treaty of Berlin, the Bulgars were a subject race.

For nearly five hundred years, the Bulgarian nation ceased to exist. In fact, as a race, the Bulgars were forgotten. Slavic writers of the eighteenth century were just beginning to realise that there was a great branch of their race on the European frontiers of Turkey. Bulgarian priests were supplanted by Greek clergy; Bulgarian secular literature, and the Bible in St. Cyril's characters, were destroyed, wherever found; what little learning sifted through the cloak of

oppression that spread over the poor country was Greek; and, in the end, the Bulgars were almost obliterated. They became mongrel Greeks, receiving their religion from the Phanariot clergy in Constantinople.

Is it strange, then, that the Bulgarians hate the Turks, that they hate them with a bitter, lasting hatred, that knows no bounds, no modifications, and surpasses the understanding of all foreigners, save those who have eaten of the Bulgars' bread and salt, and trotted with the silent chetas along the Balkan sheep-tracks? There can be no lasting peace between the Bulgar and the Turk, so runs the Bulgar creed. Truce there may be, for a generation or two. The might of Europe can dictate that which is abhorred. But as long as the Moslems rule in Europe, they are certain of the hatred of their Burgarian neighbours and subjects.

Perhaps, among the most potent causes of this hatred, the fact that a large portion of the Bulgarian race is still ruled by the Sultan, takes first rank. One may say, with little fear of denial, that Disraeli is more cordially disliked by the Bulgarians than any other figure in English history. Disraeli was the man who, by the Treaty of Berlin, prevented the creation of "Big Bulgaria," thereby

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throwing back into the Turkish grip the two-and-a-half million Bulgars of Macedonia. His action may have been necessary, in 1878, to block Russia's advance on the Mediterranean, but it has entailed years of suffering on millions of Christian men and women.

From this brief analysis, it will be seen that the Bulgars have had ample time to build up their hatred of the Turks. Some ten years ago, this hatred culminated in the revolution in Macedonia, which dragged along until the party of the young Turks came into power in the summer of 1908. It was a pitiless, devastating war, in which no quarter was asked or given. Whole Christian communities were blotted out, and the chetniks, as the insurgent soldiers were called, accomplished feats that sound, in print, unbelievable.

The spirit and the battle-cries of the Crusades were resurrected by the combatants. Once more, the cry "For Christ! Down with the infidel!" sounded over the earth; and the sinister conflict of Cross and Crescent devastated as fair a country as there is in Europe. For centuries, the Bulgarians had been crushed beneath the Moslem's iron heel; they saw other lands, whose civilisations had once been inferior to their own, enjoying



ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH.

liberty and happiness. Is it strange that they revolted?

Their fight was not in itself for freedom; they knew they were not strong enough for that. It was a cry to Europe, to America: "For pity's sake, for Christ's sake, give us liberty, we, who are slaves!"

CHAPTER I

SOFIA

IT is difficult to understand why the Balkans have remained so long out of the tourists' beaten track. One can secure tickets, advance accommodations, sleeping-car berths, what you will, for a trip to Egypt or the Victoria Falls, but when it comes to Belgrade or Sofia, the tourist agency clerk stares at one in bland surprise and says: "But no one goes there, you know, sir. We have no sources of information regarding the neighbourhood, I'm sorry to say. But we have a very select excursion starting in a week for Calcutta—exceedingly picturesque place. Can I—" If you are wise, however, you will flee his offers, and continue on your way, unassisted.

The amount of misinformation prevailing about the Balkans is amusing. This holds true not only of America, but of Western Europe. When one tells one's friends in London or Paris that one is going to visit Sofia, they remonstrate urgently, and finally say:

“Well, you ’ll take a good revolver with you, of course. And do be careful, and never carry any large sums of money.”

As a matter of fact, a stranger is perfectly safe in Bulgaria, and Sofia is regarded by foreigners who have visited it, as the best policed city on the Continent. Occasionally, it must be admitted, it is almost too well policed. It has 100,000 inhabitants; the streets are lighted by electricity; there are several lines of trolley-cars; telephones are fairly common; and one finds more gendarmes, mounted and on foot, in all sections than police in any part of New York City.

Perhaps this description will serve to dissatisfy the tourist who is looking for the picturesque. But he need not worry. Sofia has not been so entirely civilised as to lose its Old-World charm, its spicy aroma of the East. The veneer of civilisation is only skin-deep in some respects, and in others it has not made an appreciable difference. You feel, instinctively, as you step from the corridor train onto the platform of the low, clean, yellow station at Sofia, that Europe is behind you; you stand in the shadow of the Orient.

The train you have just left was drawn by an American-built locomotive. The station before you is jammed with quaintly garbed peasants,

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and at frequent intervals stand lean, dark-faced gendarmes, in blue-grey uniforms, armed with long swords and revolvers. Officers in fawn-coloured great-coats, sparkling with gold-lace, shoulder their way through the throng, yelling orders. A Turk shepherds a group of veiled women out of the third-class waiting-room, and you barely have time to realise that it is a harem in transit for one of the Macedonian towns to the south.

Despite the fact that a telegraph instrument clicks on one hand, and that a quick-lunch counter is doing business at the rate of speed that prevails in Providence when the New York express is due to start, you cannot help feeling that it is not the same, and you are not amazed, even when a person in uniform seizes your bag, and takes you forcibly under his protection. You only try to picture a New York policeman in a similar position. In fact, you have probably become used to such things, such contrasts of opera-bouffe diversity, ever since you crawled across the frontier into Servia, at the rather dangerously high speed of twenty miles an hour.

Neither Servia nor Belgrade is as pleasant as Bulgaria or Sofia, but there in the "White City" one gets one's first impression of the Balkans and

the Balkan peoples. Intrigue is in the air one breathes. The crowds in the Belgrade cafés have the manner of conspirators. There are soldiers on every hand. Serbia is at present ruled by a military clique, of which the King is a mere puppet, and for that reason it is not a particularly pleasant place for strangers. One does not relish the domineering attitude of the military, which is noticeable throughout the kingdom. Civilians are never safe from insult.

It is well to pass on. Serbia is in no sense as interesting a country as Bulgaria. It is miserably governed; its peasant classes are dirty, ignorant, and abused, and one notices in passing through the garrison towns that the barracks are the handsomest buildings. A hovel does for a school, and many of the peasants live in houses that are really caves, dug in the hillsides.

Bulgaria is at all events the leading factor in the Balkan group. Like the other petty nations included under the title that has come to stand for romance, mystery, and adventure, it labours under many evils, but not so many as its neighbours. Roumania is more wealthy, but it lacks the sturdy, sober, industrious peasantry that is the back-bone of Bulgaria. Incidentally, it may

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be remarked, the Bulgarian peasantry is the most picturesque.

I have already alluded to the contrasts, ludicrous to American eyes, that abound in Sofia. On the street-cars, one sees peasants from the near-by villages in their baggy white trousers that tighten below the knee, raw-hide sandals, short embroidered jackets, and round caps, climbing up under the side-rail in the approved style of the Brooklynite homeward-bound. The women wear a collection of several skirts, reaching to just below the knee, and much-embroidered jackets.

The prevailing scheme of embroidery is bunches of red roses with green leaves. Green is the national colour, and a favourite. Before a woman is married she wears no covering on her head, and lets her hair hang down her back in a braid. The matrons wear a white shawl as head-dress. It is becoming—when clean. In the country districts of Bulgaria, nobody wears European trousers. Even in Sofia, a large number of the poorer inhabitants retain the national costume.

Sofia is beautifully situated on a plateau, 1800 feet above the sea, surrounded on all sides by mountains. Rising sheer above the town to the west and south, towering upward like a wall, is the mountain of Vitoshak. If it feels chilly in



A VIEW ON THE SOFIA-KASPITCHAN RAILWAY LINE.

the early morning hours, one looks up at Vitoshak; if his top is white with snow, it is a bad sign, but if the snow has disappeared or is melting, then people know that the sun's warmth is increasing. In the evening, the inhabitants look toward the gap on the right flank of Vitoshak, known as "The Barometer." When a clear sky shows through, so the tradition goes, the next day will be pleasant. These are few times of the year, indeed, when the climate is not delightful, and it is always healthful.

At first glance, the visitor to Sofia is likely to be amused. Everything will appeal to his sense of the ridiculous. It seems like a comic opera—there is so much pretension, so evident a love for display. The city is a palpable imitation of one of the larger European capitals. The state business is conducted with all solemn pomp and ceremony. King Edward's procession in state to Westminster is not more imposing, speaking comparatively, than that of Prince Ferdinand up Czar Liberator Street to the Parliament House.

When one comes to look beneath the surface, however, it is easy to take a more charitable viewpoint. These people of Bulgaria are striving to better themselves—striving with all the fierce energy of a young people, headstrong and proud.

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They want to be civilised. Thirty years ago they were slaves, with no ideals, no distinct aspirations, no national sentiment. Sofia was then a village, with one presentable building, the church of Santa Sofia, eight hundred years old, that had been turned into a mosque by the Turkish conquerors. The inhabitants point out to-day the miserable mud-huts that constituted the place in those days. Now they are used as cow stables.

To be sure, one finds it hard not to laugh, when the coachman of a carriage bumping over a rocky way, full of ruts a cat could hardly climb out of, announces to you that it is the Levsky Boulevard. It is only necessary to bear in mind that the boulevard was a waste when the Turk reigned over Bulgaria. And this boulevard is lighted by electricity and planted with shade trees.

Once in a while, the people try to do too much, and then they descend to earth with a bump. They started a city hall not long ago, which was to be as big, if not bigger, than that in New York. Part of its foundations was finished, and then the authorities discovered that they had no more money. On the other hand, they are building, with money contributed by the peasants, a

cathedral which will be the largest in the Balkans, and lined with marble.

Another thing to which the visitor finds it hard to reconcile himself at first, is the military display. It seems so wantonly extravagant for a new and poor nation. One notes that the Officers' Club and the Ministry of War are two of the largest buildings in the city. A little investigation into these matters is of interest. One finds that the apparent willingness of the people to stand the burden of a large army is not assumed. It is real and actual. They do not resent the load or the fact that one-third of the annual budget goes to the War Department. All men, including the educated party, in most things opposed to the government policies, unite in declaring that the army is necessary—is a necessary evil, as one man put it.

A year ago these people lived in constant fear of Turkey—or, rather, not so much in fear of the Turks, as in fear that they would not be in readiness to seize the first opportunity offered, to strike for their complete independence and the liberation of Macedonia. Every day, the newspapers of Sofia devoted a large part of their space to discussions of the political news from Constantinople, and the progress of the revolution.

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ary propaganda in Macedonia. In the west of Europe, one hears frequent announcements that the Macedonian revolutionary government has ceased or died a natural death from over-exertion. To any one who has been in both Bulgaria and Macedonia, this talk is preposterous. The revolt will not be quashed, until reforms of a lasting nature are instituted.

In preparation for a possible war with Turkey, the Bulgarian army has been brought to a high state of efficiency, and is probably the equal, man for man, of any in Europe. Its equipment is thoroughly modern. It is a cohesive mass of units, with a splendid corps of officers, and a healthy democratic spirit that is not often found on the Continent. On a peace-footing, the Bulgarian army numbers 55,000 men, but in time of war, this skeleton force could be increased to 200,000, and if necessary, 400,000 trained men—this, despite the fact, that the country has a total population of 4,000,000 souls. It is not exaggeration to say that every able-bodied man is a soldier.

The interest of the Bulgarians in the revolutionary movement organised by their countrymen in Macedonia is not a trivial thing. It has

become a part of the national life. In most fairly well-to-do families of the country, it has become a custom to dedicate one of the sons to the revolution. The other sons serve their turns as conscripts, but one, the pick of the lot, has his liberty bought with the hard-won Napoleons of his kin, that he may go across the frontier, "on comita," to fight for the Cross.

One finds this interest in the revolution displayed on all sides. In Sofia, it is specially noticeable because there are thousands of Macedonian exiles in the city. I was once present at a great demonstration, organised by the Revolutionary Committee in Sofia, on the occasion of the visit of the Russian Grand Duke Vladimir, a son of the Czar Alexander II.

A column, three or four thousand strong, formed in front of the Restaurant Balkan, one of the headquarters for Macedonian sympathisers in Sofia, and headed by a band, marched through the streets toward the Palace. Immediately behind the band marched a detachment of men, veterans of the great Macedonian revolution of 1903, carrying banners draped with crêpe and bearing inscriptions such as "We mourn for Macedonia."

The column swept up to the Palace, and halted for an instant at the corner of Czar Liberator

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Street, the one decently paved thoroughfare in Sofia. As fate willed it, at the same moment, a victoria dashed around the corner, with a footman and coachman in red fezes on the box, and a handsome man, wearing a frock coat and fez, sitting behind. He was the Turkish commissioner.

The cheers of the crowd changed to a mighty roar. There were no words to it, but one could not mistake its meaning. The commissioner leaned forward calmly in his seat, and stared at the road ahead. I saw his hand go to a side pocket. Instantly, a knot of officers and gendarmes standing at the Palace gates leaped forward and formed before the carriage, forcing the crowd aside and striking out, right and left, with the flats of their swords. The coachman whipped up his horses, and the commissioner, still calmly inquisitive, with a courteous nod to the officers who had come to his aid, disappeared at a gallop.

Later on, that morning, I stood on the steps of the Sobranje, or Parliament House, and watched the crowd, swelled by many additional thousands, kneel in the dust about the equestrian statue of Alexander II., the "Liberator," which stands in the great square, facing the Sobranje.



CZAR LIBERATOR STREET, SOFIA.

The building with the twin towers, in the background, is the Officers' Club.

Apparently, all Sofia left its business, temporarily, to attend the demonstration. The band wailed the "Dead March," and a group of priests advanced, a service was read, and wreaths were placed about the base of the monument. Then a priest began to pray, and the men in the square sank as one upon their knees. Although the sun was beating down perpendicularly, you could see nothing but bared heads. Above them towered the mountain wall, seeming in the clear atmosphere so close that it must topple over. Here and there, a mounted gendarme loomed up. They, too, had bared their heads. There was utter silence, save for an occasional muttered interjection, like a rolling wave of sound, in response to the steady monotone of the priest.

"What does it mean? What are they doing?" I asked a Macedonian, who had travelled far and seen the world.

"What does it mean?" repeated the man, himself an exile. "What does it mean? It means tyranny, oppression, murder! It means Europe asleep, content to watch the butchery of women and children, while it shakes its finger at a grinning gargoyle in Constantinople, and says, 'Naughty, naughty!'

"Faugh! They are praying for Macedonia,

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my friend, for Macedonia, harried and burned and devastated. They repeat the words of the book, 'How long, O Lord, how long?' "

And I began to understand.

CHAPTER II

THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE

SHORTLY after reaching Sofia, I started out to find the Revolutionary Committee, which has the direction of the insurrection in Macedonia. Now, I had had some experience in tracking down South American juntas in New York, but still, I was somewhat uncertain as to how to go about a search for revolutionists in a strange city. It turned out to be absurdly simple, though. An hour or two proved that it was useless for me, ignorant of the language, to play my hand alone, and I appealed to the commissionaire of my hotel, a wonderful Austrian, named Carl, who spoke six tongues and could understand as many more.

Carl at once suggested that I take one of the hotel attendants, as guide, and go to the Restaurant Balkan, where, he said, many of the leading revolutionists dined. Accordingly, at the dinner hour, we sallied forth, and walked through a maze of narrow, twisting streets across the Public Gardens, where Stambuloff was shot.

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Down a meandering side-alley, lined with dirty shops and khans, standing in teeming court-yards, full of sheep and cattle, was the Restaurant Balkan. It was a low, broad room, crowded with tables, and almost every seat was occupied. The walls were stained with cigarette smoke, but otherwise unornamented, save by a full-length portrait of Prince Ferdinand, who receives the place of honour in every hostelry, no matter what may be the political sentiments of the owners. From the tables, smoke rose in clouds, and with it the tinkle of knives and forks, and a steady hum of conversation.

It was difficult to realise that this Restaurant Balkan possessed an eventful history; that here had been planned some of the most daring raids into Turkish territory; that it was the headquarters of many famous leaders of the revolution. What scenes the plain, rather dingy, little room had witnessed! The night when the courier came in, with the news that the Detcheff cheta (sixty strong), after holding an army of 30,000 men at bay for twenty days, had escaped with a loss of half its strength—that night the room re-echoed the clinking of glasses, and the cheers of “Viva Makedonia!”

I had barely time to make these observations,

before I was ushered to a table in the rear of the restaurant, at which sat an unusual group of men. There was something about them that compelled attention. At the head, sat a big man, with a cross in one eye, a red face, and a bald head. He was Ivan Garvanoff, of the Committee, who with Boris Sarafoff was shot in December, 1907, by a disgruntled rival chief. To his right was a man who looked nothing more than the peasant he was by ancestry, but who spoke in the purest French. He was Christo Matoff, the third member of the Committee. Sarafoff, the second member, was out of town.

With them, also, sat a dandy, dressed in the extreme Viennese fashion, a journalist named Pettko Pincheff, who had edited a revolutionary paper in a Turkish garrison town for two years, during which time the Turkish spies were continually trying to discover his whereabouts. A stout man in a frock coat was a diplomat, first secretary of the legation at Rome. Half a dozen officers, in the neat uniform of the Bulgarian army, were scattered among the party, and there were others, voivodes, doctors, lawyers, teachers, like the two members of the Committee—the brains of the revolution. Every man was a Macedonian by birth, an exile in Bulgaria be-

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cause he would not bow his head to the Turkish yoke.

At the foot of the table sat Dr. Bogirade Tartartcheff, formerly London representative of the revolutionists, who spoke English perfectly.

For some time, the conversation centred about America's interest in the Macedonian question. The Macedonians feel a trifle guilty for the Miss Stone affair. They excuse it on the ground of their need for funds, but they are beginning to realise that it prejudiced many people against their cause. For all that, they have a lively admiration for America and for President Roosevelt. Afterward, I found the President's photograph in several isolated villages, on both sides of the frontier.

Gradually, I turned the conversation toward the existing condition of affairs in Macedonia, and asked if I could not be sent over the frontier, with one of the chetas (revolutionary bands) to see things for myself. At first, they were inclined to look askance upon the project. They harangued at length upon the physical difficulties I would have to meet.

"You are a small man," said Dr. Tartartcheff. "Do you think you could stand the work? It is very difficult. You cannot rest. The askares (sol-

diers) follow you, always. You wear sandals which do not protect your feet. Often, you must go without food. When you are tired to weariness, it is your bread that you throw away, that you may not have to sacrifice any of your ammunition. It is a hard life, sir, and a thankless one.

“You do not understand the kind of warfare the Turks wage. It is not such as Western Europe knows. There is no mercy shown. It would do you no good to be a non-combatant. You would be slain, just the same, if they caught you. The askares never take prisoners. You are young and you have life before you. Think about it. Is it worth while? Remember you are not one of us; we are not your people. Why should you risk your life in an alien cause? There can be no middle course for the man who goes into Macedonia. He either goes with the Turks, or he goes with the chetniks, and if he goes with the chetniks, he goes armed.”

“I understand the risks,” I said. “I know what they will be and I am willing to take them.”

They put their heads together, and a field officer of infantry, sitting one or two places down, hitched his sabre forward, and threw a sharp interjection into the conversation. Dr. Tartartcheff turned to me.

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"Can you shoot?" he demanded. "Before we can even consider your case, it is necessary to know that. All of our men who go across the frontier are dead shots. Do you know how to handle a rifle?"

My experience with rifles had, hitherto, been confined to shooting galleries, and a stray expedition, now and then, after jack-rabbits. But I saw that this was a time for hearty lying.

"Surely," I replied, boldly. "I have been familiar with weapons all my life. I am a graduate of a military school."

Which was true, in a way, and at any rate had great influence with them, as I could see. My term "military school" evidently suggested to them a course like that offered by West Point.

The field officer of infantry favoured me with a glance of approval, and said something to Garvanoff, who had been comparatively silent. The other army officers, at the table, nodded their heads, and the diplomat shook his, vigorously, exclaiming: "*Non, non, pauvre diable.*" Again Dr. Tartartcheff turned to me.

"The gentlemen of the committee seem to look more favourably upon your request," he said. "There is a cheta, commanded by Peter Mileff, voivode (chief) of the raon (district) of Navarrokop,



CZAR FERDINAND OF BULGARIA.

which starts in a few days for Macedonia. Navarrokop is in the north-eastern part of Macedonia, and near the frontier, so that, if you become tired, it will not be difficult to send you back. But you are to understand that you do this entirely at your own risk. We cannot afford the men to give you a large escort. If you go, you go as a chetnik, armed as a chetnik, to fight as a chetnik! Do you agree?"

Frankly, I was agreeably surprised, for I had not dared to hope that they would send me with a fighting cheta. The most I had expected, was a brief jaunt over the frontier, with a party of shepherds

"I agree," I said.

The field officer of infantry, who had been curling his exceedingly bristly moustache, looked enquiringly at Dr. Tartartcheff. Dr. Tartartcheff said something to him rapidly, and he leaped to his feet. The other officers followed him, and the rest of the table rose laughingly, the diplomat still shaking his head. I alone was seated. The field officer of infantry raised his glass.

"Viva," he cried. "Viva, Americansky chetnik!"

So they accepted me into their comradeship, and I never had cause to regret it. Despite what

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others have said, every man I met proved honest and reliable, as well as absolutely unselfish.

I soon found that there was a split in the councils of the revolutionists. One party, that which I first met at the Restaurant Balkan, owned for its heads Garvanoff and Matoff. It favoured a conciliatory attitude toward the Bulgarian government, which liked to meddle with the affairs of the revolutionists, taking advantage of their obligations to it for being allowed to make their headquarters in Bulgaria. This party was more or less allied with a third party, small in numbers, but compact, which followed the lead of the notorious Boris Sarafoff. Sarafoff was indubitably nothing more than the paid spy of the Bulgarian government, used by Prince Ferdinand as a lever to control the progress of the revolution.

It should be understood, to explain this, that while the Bulgarian people, as a whole, had no selfish interest in the revolution, the Prince's government regarded it solely as a possible means for securing additional territory and power. To suit their own ends, therefore, they tried to regulate the progress of events, and mould them to the best interests, not of Macedonia, but of Bulgaria. Garvanoff's party believed that, while

this was not satisfactory, it was better than the government's open disapproval.

The second revolutionary party was led by the treasurer of the organisation, Peter Popasoff, who served as the figure-head for Yani Sandansky and Christo Tchnerpaieff, the two chiefs who captured Miss Stone, easily the most powerful individual leaders of the revolutionists. They had for their slogan "Macedonia for the Macedonians," and believed in sternly resisting any encroachments attempted by the Bulgarian government upon the methods of the organisation.

Ultimately, this trouble culminated in the shooting, in December, 1907, of Sarafoff and Garvanoff, by a chief named Nicola Panitza, one of Sandansky's lieutenants. He was the official executioner of his party, which ruthlessly decided that, as Sarafoff and Garvanoff were working antagonistically to Macedonia's best interests, they had better be removed.

For a time, as I afterward learned, the second party in the revolutionists' ranks strenuously objected to the idea of sending an alien into Macedonia, for no reason, so far as I could discover, except that it was desired by Garvanoff and his followers. But a personal interview, which I had with Peter Popasoff, was sufficient to win him

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over to my plan. Like all the revolutionists, a peasant by birth, he possessed considerable intellectual capacity, and soon saw the advantages which would accrue to the benefit of all, by having an unbiased foreigner view the revolution at close hand.

Personally, I found the insurgent leaders of all parties invariably clever and pleasant to get along with. Practically all were self-made men, and I never heard an adverse moral criticism made of one, except Sarafoff. Sarafoff, to be honest, had a villainous home reputation. It had been absolutely proved that he embezzled \$100,000 of the organisation funds, a large sum in the Balkans, but the band of cut-throats that owned his sway, was so devoted that none dared move against him. He was too valuable to the Prince's government for it to assist efforts to bring him to justice.

Sofia swarmed with Turkish spies, and all the prominent Macedonians went armed. I first discovered this at a luncheon in the Restaurant Balkan. A party of us were sitting at a table, near a street window, when a man's face appeared at a pane, pressed close against it. He must have held the position for several minutes before Philip, the waiter, a Macedonian lad, noticed him.

Philip gasped, and a dish of beans he was carrying fell to the floor. Garvanoff, sitting beside me, thrust his hand inside his coat and I saw the flash of steel. He had gripped a revolver. Instantly, the man's face was withdrawn, and subsequent investigation proved him to have been a beggar, drawn to the window by the sight of the food.

Another adventure I had with Garvanoff, several months later, was more exciting. We were going from the restaurant to his rooms, after dark. The road was lined with trees; it led through the old quarter, and unlike most of the streets of Sofia, it was narrow and not well lighted. Suddenly, he gripped my arm and motioned me to be silent, at the same time slowly turning his head sideways, so that he could look behind us. I followed his example. We plainly saw a shadow flitting away, between the tree-trunks.

"What is it?" I asked hurriedly.

"A Turk—a spy," he answered, grimly. "You had better leave me, my friend. There may be others."

But that was all we saw of the spy.

It may be well to remark that the Revolutionary Committee is a regularly elected body, chosen by the Macedonian Congress, which meets every

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year (when it is able to dodge the Turkish patrols), just over the frontier line in Macedonia. For the past couple of years, the Turkish spies have been so effective that formal sessions in Macedonia have been impossible. The last congress met in 1905, and had a stormy time of it, not because of divisions in its own ranks, but on account of the activities of the Turkish *horjee* (hunter) battalions.

Several parties of delegates, marching to it from various districts in the vilayet of Monastir, in the south-western part of Macedonia, were waylaid and shot by the Turkish troops. Indeed, it was while on his way to this congress that Damien Grueff, the greatest chief of the Bulgars, was treacherously slain. Grueff's name will live in song and story, long after the Turk has been cast from Europe. Of course, one is not expected to believe all the stories told about a popular hero, but if one tithe of those narrated by his old comrades-in-arms is true, he was an adventurer fit to stand with William Wallace and Robin Hood. He was a Bayard in gallantry—of that there can be no dispute.

His little escort of eight men was lying for the night in the hut of a Greek shepherd, somewhere in the mountains of Seres. It was bitter cold, or they would have slept out of doors, as is the

usual custom of the insurgents. They trusted the Greek because he had received kindnesses from them, in the past, and had always pleaded friendship, unlike most of his countrymen, who hate the Bulgars worse than they do the Turks.

The Greek gave the chetniks goat's milk and sireny, the white cheese of the country, and when they were settled to sleep, he slipped out to watch his flock, he said. But he travelled as rapidly as he could through the thick snow, to the nearest Turkish outpost, and at dawn the askares broke from the forest edge, upon the hut in which lay Grueff and his men. The fight was short and sharp.

Outnumbered as they were, the chetniks smashed a hole in the Turkish ranks with well-aimed volleys from their Mannlichers. Then they closed and fought bitterly with bayonet and revolver. Two chetniks went down, but the rest broke through, and the running fight was kept up for hours along the mountain trails. At last, when only four were left, a bullet struck Grueff in the thigh. The wound bled freely, but he could walk, and his comrades begged to be permitted to stay with him.

He refused. He knew that the askares would have no trouble following the trail left by his

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bloody bandages, and he gave his men strict orders to leave him, and make their way to the place where the congress was to meet. "Ask their blessing for me," he said. "Leave me as many cartridges as you can spare and go." They went—weeping. This is fact—not fiction, be it remembered.

Two days afterward, a blood-stained party of askares toiled into the nearest garrison town, and laid a sack before the commander. It contained Grueff's head, which was placed, in accordance with the Turk's idea of proper warfare, on a post in the square. When the snow was off the ground, a party of shepherds found a heap of bones on a mountain-peak, near where Grueff's comrades had bade him farewell. The skeleton was almost covered with empty cartridge-clips and shells.

Many stories of this kind were told to me during the three days that intervened before the departure of the cheta. They helped to give me an idea of the nature of the insurrection, that I could not have secured in any other way, for they were told me by the men who had lived them.

Several days after the dinner at the Restaurant Balkan, Mileff, chief of the cheta, and Peter Popasoff, conducted me to a photographer's shop on the Square of the Cathedral, where I was



THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. CYRIL IN SOFIA.

Opposite to the photographer's shop where the arms were stored.

measured for a revolutionary uniform, snuff-brown coloured cloth, thick and heavy in texture. The jacket was cut double-breasted, and the trousers were long and close-fitting, fastened at the ankles, so that one could wear leggings or golf stockings over them.

Beside being a photograph gallery, this shop was a magazine of the revolutionists. The cellar was full of arms and ammunition, and from the store the photographer produced a Männlicher carbine, with bayonet attached, and showed me the mechanism of the breach. He was a nippy little man, with bristling moustaches, and had been a famous voivode in his day.

Mileff, the voivode, was a splendid fellow, although in civilian clothes he was something of a disappointment. His loose-jointed, awkward frame did not show up to advantage in flapping trousers and ill-cut coat, but his tumbled mane of reddish hair, and shaggy beard, and eyes that always twinkled merrily, more than compensated for it. And in his fighting togs, he made a magnificent figure.

You saw, then, that he was simply a mass of hard bone and muscle, lithe as a tiger. In fact, he was the strongest man, for his build, whom I have ever known. There was not a man in his

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raon, except that giant, Nicola the Courier, who could throw him at wrestling—and wrestling is a sport at which the Bulgars are adepts. Finally, Mileff was twenty-seven years old, and looked older; he had been fighting since he was twenty and in the course of seven years had made a name for himself as an executive head. I heard, on every hand, that his raon was one of the best organised in Macedonia.

CHAPTER III

THE START OF THE CHETA

BEFORE sunrise, on a morning in early September, Mileff and I set out for the railroad station in Sofia, where we purchased tickets for T'Barzardjeck, the scene by the way, of the massacres which brought down upon the heads of the Sultan and Disraeli the wrath of Gladstone, and resulted, indirectly, in the intervention of Russia. As we were still in Bulgarian territory, we wore civilian clothes. The arms and ammunition had been sent on before us by express. Without question, the Bulgarian officials had cognisance of the shipment, but it is their policy to wink at the operations of the bands, as long as they maintain a semblance of secrecy.

As I have already had cause to remark, Bulgarian trains are slow, and it was noon before we arrived at T'Barzardjeck, which is midway on the line to Philippopolis. We were met at the station by the mayor of the town, a good revolutionist, himself, who had been "on comita" in his

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youth, and who took luncheon with us. Ordinarily, I believe, the phrase, "taking luncheon," implies a meal of some degree of excellence. Let me not seem to assume that which is untrue. The hotel at T'Barzardjeck is not a particularly clean place, and several pigs and a goat, not to speak of hens, ran in and out of the café, during the meal, rooting for scraps among our feet. As my friends did not seem to mind it, I made shift to pretend that I was as much at home, too, but I could not help resenting the intrusion of a pig's head into my lap. After that the landlord's son was stationed at the doorway to see that the pigs were barred from the room.

At two o'clock we started again, in what was locally known as a phaeton. It resembled a victoria. To reach the village of Logina, near the frontier, we had to traverse the Pass of Abadana through a range of the Balkans. This part of Bulgaria has not felt the alleviating touch of civilisation, to any great extent, and the roads are simply execrable. They are intended for ox-carts, and they seldom offer opportunities for rapid travelling. What is worse, they are positively dangerous, in the mountains.

Yet, despite the sufferer's natural desire to criticise, it is only fair to recall that the Bulgarian

engineers are doing their best to correct these faults, every year—and when one has had a little experience with Turkish roads, one is not inclined to say things about Bulgaria's highways.

The scenery was beautifully wild and rugged. The road skirted the wall of the pass, clinging to it often by the barest margin of safety. It crossed and re-crossed the stream that rushed along the bottom, and the massive design of the bridges that were thrown over the torrent at frequent intervals, proved how dangerous it could be in flood-time. High above, rising perpendicularly, soared the masses of the mountains, scoured and worn by the winter snows, their flanks clothed in luxuriant growths of fir.

Time and again, we had to get out so that the horses might have a rest. Twice, we stopped at roadside khans for a drink of thin red wine and a dish of stew, costing twenty or thirty stotinkas, from four to six cents. Sometimes, as we were nearing a turn in the road, where an elbow of rock, cropping forward, shut out all view of what was coming toward us, a yell would echo through the defile, and a courier on a scrawny mountain pony would gallop around it, flourishing his quirt, and having missed our carriage by the narrowest possible margin, disappear down the trail.

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Sometimes, again, we would trot around one of these sudden turns, and find ourselves at once mixed up in a tangled pile of straining oxen, perhaps twenty or thirty of them, hitched to a single creaking, wooden-wheeled wain, stuck in a hole. More than once our driver came near impaling himself upon a horn; but he did not appear to mind it. If the other driver or herdsman happened to be a Christian they would both laugh. But if he was a Pomak, as the Mohammedan Bulgars are called, there would be an exchange of fluent language.

It was an uncomfortable drive. But the journey was worth all the trouble and inconvenience. Up there, in the mountains, we were in another world; certainly, in another continent. All the people wore the picturesque costumes of the Bulgarian peasants. Strings of pack ponies filed by after tiny bell-mares, lank woodsmen on their backs. Then there were the Pomaks, swarthy fellows, dressed in gaudy colours, and wearing silver earrings and anklets. They were unpleasant-looking customers, and as they tramped beside their bullock carts, sullen and ill-favoured, most of them in voluminous and dirty turbans, one was glad not to be alone.

Besides the Pomaks, there were the Tziganes,

or gypsies, who are scattered thickly throughout the Balkans. They are a wild lot, dark-skinned and in bad repute. It is a saying of the road that "no honest man camps near a Tzigane or a Pomak." We saw a number of parish priests, also, and monks from the mountain monasteries, in black robes and high hats, with the brim on the crown, riding the diminutive mountain ponies, their feet almost touching the ground.

Toward evening, we neared the summit of the pass, and at the foot of the last incline, the driver said that if we hoped to reach Logina before morning, we would have to give the horses a rest. So we descended and took to a foot-trail that wound up a mountain-flank to the summit. Far below us, the carriage was crawling along the road. Ahead, was an immense pile of mountains, with the sun setting behind them in a glorious combination of colours. Crimson, pink, orange, and violet, the rays appeared to be kindling the forest, until the whole landscape of jagged peaks was ablaze across the horizon.

When the carriage arrived, we took up the trail. In the lower ravines it was growing dark, and we passed many camps of lumber caravans, tucked away in niches of the hills. Fires blazed merrily, savage dogs ran out to bark at us, and

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we caught the sound of voices, raised in the chorus of a gypsy song, throbbing with the untamed passions of the East, suggesting subtly the smell of the wood-smoke and the munching of the cattle.

About eleven o'clock we struck a fairly good post-road, and in a few minutes bowled into Logina. At Logina, as at T'Barzardjeck, we were given all but an official welcome, at the hands of representative citizens. Indeed, it is a fact that Logina is a nest of revolutionists, from the mayor and corporation, down to the youngest infant. It is the regular stopping place for the chetas entering Macedonia by the eastern "canal," and it goes without saying that the whole town knew what we were there for.

The next day, after breakfast, which in rural Bulgaria consists of Russian tea, klepb or bread, and cheese, the members of the band went to an upstairs room to fill ammunition-pouches with clips of cartridges. The bureau, beds, and floor were covered with rifles, revolvers, belts, and uniforms. Most of the morning was spent in filling pouches and testing rifles, part of the time with the door open. An army officer, who had a room at the opposite end of the hall, looked in once and passed on. He said nothing, but I fancied

I saw his eyelid flicker gently in the direction of the door. At any rate, a chetnik rose and closed it.

According to the original plans, we were to have started that night, but as Vassilioff, the business representative of the revolutionists in the district, had been unable to secure a pack-horse for the extra baggage, we were compelled to wait over a day. During the morning the rest of the chetniks arrived. There were a dozen in all,—Nicola, called the Courier and Andrea, both of them sub-chiefs; Kortser, a slim, sandy-haired man, with a waist like a girl's; and Peter and Johnny, two quaint brigands. Johnny possessed a Bulgarian name, but it was beyond comprehension. So we compromised on Johnny, with great mutual satisfaction. I told him it was a title of honour in America. There were several others, whose names I do not remember—and I must not forget Dodor.

It was his first time "on comita," and he was not more than eighteen years old. His smile was irrepressible and wholesomely comforting. Many a time, after a hard march or brisk fight, Dodor's boyish grin gave every one courage and resolution. He bubbled over with life and spirits, and he did not know what fatigue meant—not even when

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his young face was lined with it, and his eyes stared out of hollows. His laugh rang just the same. It would be difficult to forget how he drove up to the Hotel Makedonia, in a battered old phaeton, beside his mother, a woman of Spartan appearance, who, by her looks, might have claimed Massachusetts as her birthplace.

She bade Dodor a stern farewell, in the presence of us all, committing him to Mileff, whom she instructed to make a good fighting man of him. Having shook hands with Mileff and the rest (she blessed me, because I was a foreigner and took interest in her people), she climbed back into her phaeton, and sitting rigidly erect, vanished in a cloud of dust. I never saw her again; I do not know whether she ever saw her son again.

The two days spent in Logina were devoted to arranging the details of the expedition. Most of the time, Vassilioff was with us. He was a school teacher, a Macedonian exile—a clever man, and more Europeanised than most of his friends. We called at his house, in the morning, and met his wife and sister, who served Turkish coffee and preserved cherries, the polite refreshments of the country.

In the course of the same morning, we visited an apothecary's shop, and I glanced curiously at

a number of paper packages, marked with red crosses, which were being tied up for Mileff. He noted my surprise and smiled.

"Arsenic," he said. "In case the Turks get us. I have packages here, for all the chetniks. It is not good to be captured by the Turks."

Probably, I looked a bit surprised. This was a contingency which had not entered into my speculations. I had heard that the revolutionists generally carried poison, because it was alleged that the Turks were in the habit of torturing prisoners, but I had always been disposed to scout the tale, as moonshine. Mileff laughed openly at my disgusted expression, and continued:

"You see, it is necessary. The Turks torture us, whenever they catch us alive, and the chetniks have orders to save the last shot in their revolvers for themselves. But sometimes they forget, or they may be separated from their arms, and then they have the poison. It is good, eh? Better than being tortured?"

I shrugged my shoulders, and I must admit, it took me several hours to recover from a peculiar nauseated feeling. Suicide, even when involuntary, is not pleasant to contemplate.

That night everything was ready. A pack-pony

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had been secured, the property of a Macedonian woodsman named Boris, who had fought in the great revolution of 1903, and had been caught and tortured by the askares. He was glad to have an opportunity to strike back at his old enemies.

A rather funny incident happened, just before we started. Giorgi, the inn-keeper, proudly brought before me two men who could speak English. One was named Athenas and declared he had been a street-car conductor in New Haven. The first thing he said was a question about the result of the previous Yale-Princeton football game. He said he had once seen a game. Athenas was an enthusiastic rooter for the Blue and endeavoured to sing the "Boola" for the benefit of the café. The second man had learned the language in the American missionary school at Samakov.

By nine o'clock, all the men were in their uniforms, with their arms and equipment at hand. The equipment of a Macedonian chetnik is designed primarily for fighting, stiff fighting, and a great deal of fighting. Comfort is a wholly secondary consideration. We wore two sets of underclothing, a thick woollen one and light cottons next the skin. It is extremely cold in the mountains,



THE HOTEL MAKEDONIA AT LOGINA.
Rendezvous of the cheta.

after dark, and woollen underwear is an absolute necessity to guard against chill.

Each man carried a cartridge belt, containing one hundred and fifty rounds of rifle ammunition; a web belt, containing fifty rounds of revolver cartridges; a French seven-shooter and a Männlicher carbine and knife-bayonet. The revolvers were hung around the neck on a cord, so that in close hand-to-hand fighting, a man could drop his revolver and apply both hands to his bayonet. This plan of giving men good revolvers, as well as rifles, has worked very well. Many times chetniks have broken through superior forces of Turkish troops solely because they had seven sure shots in reserve.

Down at the inn stables, Nicola and Boris were making up the packs to go on the pony. In them, were rough surgical and medical supplies, spare ammunition, some extra automatic revolvers, a mass of literature to be disseminated among the Macedonian villages, an electric battery for exploding mines, and food enough to last four or five days.

The cheta were gathered upstairs in a big room, saying good-bye to a number of the villagers. Out of respect to the army officers dining below stairs, the conversation was in whispers. That

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peculiar tension which always precedes an important undertaking was perceptible in the air. The men fumbled with their knapsacks, adjusted cloaks, and kept up a running fire of nervous comment. In the doorway, stood the pet lamb of the inn-keeper, filching bread from our knapsacks, whenever it had a chance.

I think the mayor was whispering a speech of farewell, when a waiter entered, with his arms full of slim bottles of Bulgarian beer. Glasses were passed around, and we stood in an irregular circle, some on beds, some on chairs. The light from the flickering kerosene lamps danced over the rifle barrels, the bearded faces, and long hair of the men, and shone through the glasses, as they were raised in response to the murmured toast "Viva Makedonia." The soft clink of the glasses was the only noise.

"Heidi! Marché!" ("Forward! March!") said Mileff, as he set down the glass and wiped his beard, with the back of his hand. Through the dark hall, we crept, and into the yard, brightly illuminated by the stars and the full harvest moon. Dodor chuckled as he emerged from the doorway, and a rumbling sounded within. An instant later, a stout villager came tumbling down before the onslaught of Giorgi's lamb, which, desiring a free

passage, had calmly butted him aside. Simultaneously, the light in the room of the officer, at the end of the hallway, went out. If called upon for a report, he could swear that he had been in bed when the Mileff cheta departed.

The gate of the yard creaked open, and Boris led the pony out. Nicola was to be the guide of the expedition across the frontier line and he followed. Then came Mileff and I. As we filed out, the villagers crowded up to shake hands.

In the moonlight, the road stretched before us like a piece of white tape. Occasionally, the soft rays were caught and refracted by a piece of steel; but for the most part there were only the gliding shadows, to show that men were marching on the Prince's highroad from Logina to Barna.

At the cross-roads, a half-mile from the village, Vassilioff and Giorgi said good-by, passing down the line and solemnly kissing each man on the cheek. The Bulgarians are not usually demonstrative people, and the little ceremony was impressive. As long as we could see them, they stood there at the crossing of the ways, two tiny black spots in the amphitheatre of the valley, with the mountains rising high around them.

CHAPTER IV

THE MARCH TO THE FRONTIER

A SHORT distance beyond the spot where Vassilioff and Giorgi bade us good-bye, we struck off the main road, into a narrow sheep-track that wound through the fields, toward the mountains. Half an hour's brisk marching brought us into the foot-hills, and the entire valley was spread out before us, like a panorama on a stage. Here and there, on the hillsides, we could see farm-houses, with their barns and sheds, each group standing by itself, in a court-yard. From these court-yards rose a chorus of angry barks. Up and down the valley of Barna, dogs barked by thousands, it seemed, and the hills echoed and re-echoed the clamour.

As yet unused to these pests of the Near East, I could not understand why it was that the garrison, only a couple of miles away in Logina, was not following the trail of an imaginary Turkish raid. But one grows used to dogs in the Balkans. One comes, in time, to understand that the sole foe

a stranger has to fear in Bulgaria, is a village cur, even as one becomes able to sleep while they howl.

Sometimes, the sheep-track passed the rear of farmyards, and we could look down over the walls, at the cattle lying in the enclosure. The people within must have known that strangers were passing, but they made no sign. All the Bulgars can be trusted, and they had been apprised before hand that the cheta would start that night. The path climbed steadily, and the way grew consistently rougher. When it did not run through the soft earth of ploughed fields, at an angle of forty-five degrees, it lay upon the rocks of the hillside.

Once we passed a shepherd, toiling down to the village in the plain, with a message for the doctor. A comrade was sick in the little hut, miles away in the mountains. A few words were exchanged, and he passed on. For the first hour or so, the marching was not difficult, but gradually the load of ammunition, arms, and thick clothing, told on the party. My feet, unused to the rawhide sandals, were aching miserably, and none was sorry when Nicola led us into a meadow, beside a mountain brook, and the word went down the line that we were to have a pocheefka (rest) until dawn. And dawn

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was plainly not far off, judging by the dull grey light that was creeping up in the eastern sky.

The men dropped to the earth, first taking care to spread waterproof cloaks, for a heavy dew had fallen. All were warmed by the hard march, but in five minutes the dry cold of the mountain air had chilled us to the bone. For some time, we shivered in silence; then Dodor and I sought the bed of the stream, where driftwood abounded. Having found a plentiful supply, we impressed several of the chetniks to help us, and quickly had a good fire going. This could be done quite safely, as we were still some miles from the frontier.

Warmed by the cheerful blaze of the driftwood, we curled up in our cloaks and lay down, feet to the flames. But sleep did not come to many, for the moment the sun began to show over the mountain tops, the word was given to march. No country likes to have armed men seen upon her highways in the broad daylight. A mile down the road we entered the mouth of a defile, a gigantic cleft in the heart of the mountains, which reared up, on either hand, in their usual dark-green garb of the Balkan fir. Beyond a shoulder in the pass, we came to a collection of

huts, built of stone and wood, upon the banks of the stream which scrambled along beside the road. A buzz-saw stood idle in a shed, and only the murmur of the water, running through an elaborate system of flumes overhead, broke the deep peace of the solitude. For the first time, I realised the day was Sunday.

A woodman, massive of limb, brown and honest visaged, rose from his ablutions at a little pool and greeted us with frank courtesy. And here let me say something for the Bulgar—something that I learned from close personal contact. He is plain, unassuming, and frugal. He is a man of few words. He never talks when speech is unnecessary. Toward strangers he is apt to be diffident and shy; and perhaps that is the reason why some people have accused him of uncouthness. It is an old saying in Europe that if you gave a Bulgarian a patch of rough ground, he would make it into a rose-garden in a year; but if you gave the same ground to a Montenegrin, it would be still the same at the year's end. Yet, continues the proverb, in a drawing-room a Montenegrin is self-possessed and at ease; a Bulgar knows not what to do. To my mind that is sheer calumny. I never saw the common Bulgarian peasant, who did not own a native courtesy that would put to

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shame the polished accomplishments, after all, artificial, of a Chesterfield.

The man by the pool was immediately joined by two others, all dressed in the costume of the Balkan woodsman, leggings to the knees, rawhide sandals, and wicked-looking six-shooters stuck in their sashes. All three had been "on comita" in the revolution of 1903, and their camp was one of the stations on the "underground railroad" leading to the north-eastern "canal" into Macedonia, of which I have spoken. They greeted us with simple, but hearty kindness, and insisted upon our taking their bunks. At noon, they cooked a savory mess of soup, made from beans of the plain Boston variety, and pork, with an onion or two and some peppers, to add to its flavour. This, with black bread and loaf sugar, made a princely repast for chetniks.

At five o'clock, or about sunset, we started again. It was not considered wise to use the main highroad that ran through the defile, so the cheta struck off into a gully, and travelled by a less frequented and more difficult route, that clung high up on the mountain-flanks. The pack-pony was the happiest member of the party, in these circumstances. Nothing seemed to daunt him, and he never bothered to pick out convenient



PRINCE BORIS OF TIRNOVA,
Crown Prince of Bulgaria.

stepping-stones or fallen tree-trunks, when he came to a rivulet. The track scrambled alternately along the bottoms of precipices and on their edges. At one point, glancing to my left, I saw a clear drop of five hundred feet, a step away.

Another time, we came to a brook thirty feet wide, bridged by a tree-trunk, possibly four inches in diameter. We crossed in a line, holding hands. A fall to the rock-studded bed would have been a nasty matter. It was provoking to see the pony splashing blissfully through the shallows. Nicola, in the lead, strode on relentlessly, picking his way with unerring instinct in the darkness. Very rarely a man stumbled on a loose boulder that went crashing down the mountain to the ravines below. It was wearing work, and the ten-minute breathing spells that came at intervals of an hour or so, were invariably welcome.

Suddenly, along toward midnight, we emerged from a gloomy ravine, so narrow that the fir trees arching over it made a complete roof, into a bottle-shaped valley, sparkling in the soft moonlight. The same stream we had seen by the logging-camp foamed down its centre, and on both banks stood the huts of another camp.

It is not safe to approach a house on the Bul-

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garian frontier, without warning, so the voivode gave a loud shout. A light twinkled in a window, and several men appeared at the doors with rifles and revolvers in their hands. They hailed us, and Mileff called to them a second time, telling who we were. Then, one of them came forward.

His figure was straight and sparse as that of a youth, but he walked like one who had been partially paralysed, and as he came nearer, I saw that his face was lined with suffering, while the unkempt masses of his hair were a pure frosty sheen that was not due to the moonlight. He seemed an old, old man, but his eyes gleamed with a fire that bespoke the essence of youth, and his voice was full and strong.

Spass Arizonoff—that was his name—greeted us cordially, with the same simple courtesy of the three woodsmen in the first lumber-camp, and invited us to take his hut, as the largest, for our quarters. Wood was piled on the hearth, low stools drawn up, and the cognac bottle passed round. Other men came in and sat and talked until almost morning—talked about the past history of the revolution; about the great men who had sat in this log-hut on their way to war-torn Macedonia, from which some of them never

returned; about the battles they had fought and the songs they had sung.

Names held in reverence in the Balkans were brought up—Detcheff, Grueff, Sandansky, Tchner-paieff, the Tartartcheffs, Popoff, Papa Christoff, the fighting priest. Then they sang the songs of the revolution, the mournful *Chant of the Chetniks*, and the stirring *Makedonsky March*.

Early in the morning, we threw ourselves into the rough bunks and on the dirt floor, to get what sleep we might. One-half of the hut was given up to a cow-stable, divided from the living-room by a partition pierced with a doorless doorway. It was not a precisely comfortable or sanitary place, but adaptability is often a necessary virtue.

When we awakened, Spass Arizonoff sat on the doorstep, kneading bread on a dirty board. He smiled at me and pointed to the stream which flowed a couple of feet from the threshold. It was a splendid opportunity for a bath, and I felt that I could not miss it—having been grimly informed in Sofia, that the Turks did not allow the chetniks time to wash in Macedonia. By the time I returned breakfast was ready. The menu may be interesting. One might have the inevitable black bread, very heavy and sodden,

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loaf sugar, peppers and eggs, the latter two delicacies, either raw and separate, or fried together.

After breakfast, the chetniks sat in front of the hut and smoked or shot at a mark on the hillside, across the brook. Spass Arizonoff fondled the breech of a Männlicher, and talked with his eyes on the blue mountain tops at the boundary of Macedonia, distinctly outlined in the clear atmosphere. About him, sat the chetniks, and the rough lumbermen and mountaineers, each wearing in his sash the long revolver which is the companion of every borderer in the Balkans—a country where frontier disputes are sudden, quickly fought, and as quickly forgotten.

“No,” he said, slowly. “I am not an old man, guspodine (mister, sir). I am what you would call young, in the plains, but the life of the mountains has aged me. And I have seen much trouble. Many children have sprung from my loins and in Macedonia, blowgu (sweet, dear) Makedonia, beyond the hills, I had a wife who was the fairest maid in our village, but now, of them all, I have only this one.”

He pointed to the sixteen-year-old boy at his side, a serious-faced youngster, in his shaggy mountain dress.

The words of the old man fell like the clear strokes of a bell, laden with pathos and a certain rude poetry that seemed elemental.

“We were happy in our village, until the days of 1903 came,” he continued. “Now, I did not go ‘on comita,’ for I was a man with a family, and in such cases it behooves the boys to do the fighting. So I sent my eldest son to Boris Sarafoff—by-Boris (by is a term of endearment) of the Long Hair. There was naught said about the boy, but somehow, I know not how, unless it was by the mouth of a Greek dog, child of the Devil, as are all Greeks, word reached the Pasha that our village had helped the chetniks.

“On Sunday, while we were in the church, they came upon us two battalions, with mountain guns, and they slew many, showing no mercy. Also they let loose a horde of Bashi-bazouks, who pillaged the houses and spared none—not even the women and the children. All whom they saw they killed—my grandfather, who would have been eighty; my little Peter, not out of arms. They tossed him into the flames, guspodine, and when his mother would have—but it is not good for you to know, guspodine. And, perhaps, you will see for yourself. If God wills it,

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that will be best. But I cannot tell, guspodine. You will pardon an old man—but I forgot; I am not old—only middle-aged. So I told the conscript officer, the last time he passed. My place in the company will be beside Ivan, here.”

He chuckled as he laid his hand on the shoulder of the lad.

“Yes,” he said, half to himself, “Bulgaria will not stay quiet forever. Some day it will come—some day these fiends will go.”

There was a silence.

“But what did they do to you?” I asked.

His gums bared themselves ferociously, in a hideous grin, and he held up his hands. God! That men should do such things!

“So, they did,” he said, seeming to take a childish delight in my look of horror. “So. With knives, they cut off my index fingers and severed the cords of my wrists and my ankles. Not so that the arteries would bleed and I should die, but so that I could not work or walk well. Then the Bashi-bazouks took me and some others who moaned, and drove blazing pine-splinters into our fingers behind the nails. You can see the holes, to-day, guspodine. Would you not? Well, then.”

He shrugged his shoulders, staring at the blue outline of the mountains.

"Excuse me, guspodine," he said, rising to his feet. "I have bread to bake."

CHAPTER V

NEARING THE FRONTIER

IN the frontier districts of Bulgaria, bordering upon Macedonia, there is frequently secret war between the Christian mountaineers and the Pomaks. They look upon each other with mutual hatred. The Christians tell horrible stories of their enemies' cruelty and deceit, and refuse to believe that a Pomak can be prompted by any motive that is good. On the other hand, the Pomaks are not without their defence, and they maintain that they are downtrodden and oppressed—martyrs to their religious convictions.

The entire cause of the ill-feeling is the difference in religion, which has led the Pomaks to side with the Turks in every border dispute, and to spy upon the Macedonian insurgents, that they may curry favour with the officers of the Turkish frontier garrisons, by giving them information acquired on the Bulgarian side of the mountains. In return for such favours, the Turkish authorities wink at violations of the customs regulations, and



SPASS ARIZONOFF AND HIS HOME.
Where the cheta stopped.

for really potential help, reward the spies more materially. Pomaks, like most other people, believe in taking the opportunities that come their way, and broadly speaking, every one of them is a smuggler—when he gets a chance. I wish to do them justice, but I must admit that while they may not merit all the charges brought against them by their Christian brethren, they are unsavoury characters.

With the help of the explanations contained in the foregoing paragraphs, one will not find it difficult to understand the mingled feelings of distrust and fear, with which the chetniks beheld a Pomak pack-train winding down the mountain-side, opposite the hut of Spass Arizonoff, about noon-time. There is a garish picturesqueness in the dress of the Mohammedan Bulgars, and the whole mountain was alive with the flaring colours of sash, turban, and jerkin. In each sash glistened an array of pistols and long knives. I noted, simultaneously, that all the chetniks had brought their rifles from the hut, and were fully armed. Pomaks are inveterate thieves, at the least.

Later in the afternoon, when we had finished the last of an American *compote* of cranberries, which I concocted for the chetniks, to their great delight, one of the Pomaks strolled over

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to our hut. He walked with the lithe, easy swing of the mountaineer, and from the opposite bank of the little stream, he waved to us, carelessly, but as he stepped upon the plank bridge, his hand went, just as carelessly, to be sure, to the butt of the six-shooter in his sash.

"Dobra den (good-day), friends," he hailed.

The chetniks nodded coldly, and the voxvode replied to his greeting. The lumber-jacks gave him scant notice. They knew how much they could expect from their Pomak neighbours, in the event of a Turkish raid. Still carelessly, the Pomak, a tall, lumber fellow, swung himself to a seat on a log and fingered the straps of his sandals.

"It is good weather, friends," he remarked.

"Yes," said Mileff, and rolled a cigarette.

"Have you marched far?" queried the Pomak.

"A few leagues," said Mileff.

The Pomak paused, and as no man offered him tobacco, the sign of friendship in the Near East, he drew out his own box.

"You go to Gramiza (the frontier post)?" he asked, moistening a piece of rice-paper.

"It may be. I have not decided," Mileff answered.

The Pomak gave it up and rose with a yawn.

“Good luck, friends,” he said. “May the dews of the night fall lightly. I go to my herds.”

Nobody answered him, and he started off across the stream, to where the mules and ponies of his party were picketed, and the camp-fires were already gleaming red in the dusk. His hand had never relaxed its light grip on the butt of his revolver.

Just as the Pomak reached his camp-fire, and was lost in the circle of squatting figures gathered around it, a shout came from the hillside above. A man in uniform stood on the summit of the ridge, silhouetted against the sunset pink of the sky. In one hand he carried a rifle, and the other he waved in a gesture of greeting. Spass Arizonoff shouted back to him, and he began the descent, passing through the camps of the Pomaks, on his way.

“He is one of the Prince’s foresters,” explained Mileff. “All the foresters are good friends of ours, and he may have news for us from the frontier.”

Humming a gay little peasant *chanson*, the man strode into the circle of yellow light, cast through the doorway from the hearth within, where supper was being prepared. He was a typical Bulgarian soldier, stalwart and handsome, clad

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in a close-fitting, dark-green uniform and a round, black hussar cap, with the Bulgarian lion on the front. The rawhide sandals on his feet were met by puttees of braided cloth, and he carried a small knapsack, a rifle, and revolver. That was all. Mileff and several of the chetniks greeted him as an old friend.

These Bulgarian foresters are few in number, and it is their duty to carry law and order into the almost inaccessible mountain districts, to which the regular gendarmerie seldom penetrate. They have to watch the frontier, keeping a careful eye on the doings of the Turkish troops, and perform duties similar to those of the Canadian Northwest mounted police. Many a time, one of them has tramped into a lonely lumber-camp, and arrested a blood-stained maniac, who had murdered half his comrades and frightened the rest away.

From the forester, we learned that the Pomaks encamped on the hillside were travelling to the interior of Bulgaria, so that we had no cause to fear them; but he had noticed several other Pomak caravans camped along the trails leading to Macedonia, and he declared that if we hoped to get over the frontier, without a fight, we must be careful not to attract their attention. In addition

to these facts, the forester gave us valuable information concerning the disposition of the Turkish frontier guards. He even drew a map on the ground for Mileff, showing the best way to encircle the outposts on the Macedonian side of Granitza, the village on the line which is occupied by Turkish and Bulgarian garrisons.

Acting on the advice of the forester, Mileff decided to postpone our departure until early in the morning, when the Pomaks would be asleep, and the Turkish sentinels likely to be less vigilant. This was agreeable news to the cheta, for we had not expected to get any sleep that night. It does not take a man long to learn the value of sleep, when he finds it hard to obtain.

It seemed that I had barely closed my eyes, when I felt a light prod on my shoulder. Nicola was going down the line, waking the men. Before the fire, Mileff was busy writing a note which was to go by courier to Sofia, announcing the departure of the cheta on the last stage of its journey to the frontier. The fire on the hearth had burned low and cast long shadows over the sleepy chetniks. A glance at my watch showed that it was three o'clock.

For the first time, we had slept with our ammunition belts strapped on, so getting up was

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merely a matter of standing and stretching oneself. It was a black night. The moon had set, and only a few stars were visible. Around us were the mountains, gaunt and dim, spectral shapes that threatened vaguely. Across the little valley, the fires in the Pomaks' camp were crimson splotches in the darkness. A dog barked and cattle shifted about uneasily. Evidently, they scented our movements. The chetniks moved quietly; not a stick cracked under foot. Rifle magazines were loaded, and the orders were to fire first and hail afterward, in case of meeting strangers. There was a muffled tramp of hoofs as Boris led the pack-pony from his shed in the rear, and glancing down the column, Mileff gave the order to march.

The road was a trifle better than any we had traversed before, though perhaps I thought so, simply because it was easier on my feet; during the day Dodor had filled my sandals with soft grass, making a pad around the sore spots. A liberal application of oil had helped matters, too. Only half the streams we came to were unbridged, and I think we forded not more than two or three that night—an enviable record in the Balkans.

We had been marching for some time—indeed,

the sky was beginning to grow pale, with the approach of dawn—when we reached a waggon-bridge over a swift rivulet. It creaked under the weight of our feet, and barking angrily, three dogs dashed at us out of a clump of bushes. They were really dangerous animals, and tried fiercely to get at our throats. Had it not been for the noise, the chetniks would have pistoled them cheerfully; as it was, we were obliged to take to our rifle-butts and the stones that lay scattered on the ground.

To add to our discomfort, we saw, down a small ravine, a camp-fire, and moving about within its circle three figures, distinguishable as Pomaks, by their head-dresses. Whether they could see us, it was impossible to tell. At any rate, we fled and sought shelter on the other side of the valley in a secluded glade, where we bivouacked to await developments. If the Pomaks had seen the cheta, Mileff knew they would seek us out, to spy upon our movements.

Soon after sunrise, sure enough, a large Pomak party passed us, going in the direction of Granitza and the frontier. They eyed us, sullenly, vouchsafing a churlish word of greeting. It was comical to see how the children ran, as they saw the dreaded chetniks—who could not have hurt a

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hair of their heads, Mohammedans and off-spring of Christian-killers though they were.

Salt pork, black bread and sugar sufficed for breakfast and after that we had an opportunity to sleep, throwing out two sentries as a precaution. In the afternoon, a couple of insurgent agents from Granitza visited the camp. They said that news of our presence had been brought there by the Pomaks, who had communicated it to the officer of the Turkish garrison. Delay, they thought, would be fatal. We must push across the frontier that evening. Otherwise, the Turks would have time to concentrate extra troops, and they would be sure to make formal complaint to the Bulgarian governor of the district that insurgents were hiding in his territory.

While these agents were in camp, the Pomaks who had passed in the morning returned. They were affable this time, and saluted us with ostentatious courtesy. All of them, and their ponies, were loaded with bundles—probably presents from the Turks for their information.

About four o'clock, our friends from Granitza started for home, and Mileff ascended a near-by hill, to survey the country with his binoculars. He found it clear, and at five o'clock we started. We marched swiftly for half an hour, always

up-hill, each man stepping exactly in the footsteps of the man in front of him. Rifles were carried at the "ready," and they were loaded.

Pushing through a thicket of underbrush and scrub trees, at the end of the spurt, we emerged upon a ridge and stared across a deep valley, full of gaunt, naked pine trees, at a second ridge, behind which stretched tier on tier of blue mountains, each tier higher than the one before it, melting away until the topmost one seemed but a veil of azure mist. This vast solitude of peaks was capped by a blaze of colour—a sky streaked with every hue of the rainbow. Beams of light shot back and forth, from peak to peak, so that the landscape looked as if some giant's paint-box had been turned upside down over the hills.

There was something uncommonly spectral and sinister in this gloomy valley of pine trees, dark and bare, beneath the splendid sunset. Picture a huge natural trough, between two steep ridges, filled with telegraph poles. That was what the valley looked like. Not a tree bore a leaf or a branch, although all about them, the hills were thick with firs. Nicola, who was leading the column, motioned with his hand for us to drop to the ground.

He and Mileff held a whispered conversation,

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staring across the valley at the blue mountains backed by the sunset. Meantime, we glanced down at the valley and at the ridge opposite. One could not help speculating upon the unpleasant consequences were a Turkish battalion, equipped with machine guns, lying on its summit. Thinking of means to dislodge antagonists so placed, I became convinced that they were actually there. A spasm gripped my heart and my eyes clouded. By some curious psychological freak, I imagined I could see red fezes stuck at intervals behind the bushes, but the "fezes" were only clumps of gorse or bracken.

Mileff had taken out his field-glasses, and was searching the horizon. A closer inspection revealed that to our left a spur connected the two ridges. One could command a vast area from our eyrie, even with the naked eye, but not a trace of life was to be seen. A gentle breeze blew through the tree-boughs, and bent the tips of the grass blades and the gorse.

The voivode rose on one elbow, and pointed over the tops of the pine trees at the blue mountains beyond the opposite side of the valley.

"Makedonia," he said.

CHAPTER VI

CROSSING THE FRONTIER

ALL the chetniks chuckled happily, like boys. Yet there was that in their chuckles which was not mirth. I saw it in Andrea's face, staring out of the eyes of him. "Makedonia," he whispered to himself, several times over, reverentially, as one whispers a prayer in church. They stared at the mountains across the valley, and hitched their revolvers forward. Most of them had fastened several clips of cartridges in their belts, where they could be gotten at easily.

Again, Mileff swept the hills with his binoculars, and held low-toned council with Nicola—big, soft-footed Nicola, who knew every inch of the frontier region and every sheep-track that percolated through the forest. Rising to their feet, but motioning to us to remain recumbent, they stole forward along the ridge, and finally disappeared in a thick patch of undergrowth, near the spur that connected the ridge we were on with the opposite one, making of the valley below us a cul-de-sac.

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Five minutes later they reappeared and waved to us to come on. We advanced at a dog-trot.

For obvious strategical reasons, Nicola led the way by a path along the spur to the other side of the valley. To have descended the hillside would have been to expose the cheta to a plunging fire from ambushed enemies. On the spur we were able to see all the landscape about us. We moved in single file and very warily. A few minutes' marching took us to the opposite ridge, and here we found a well-beaten track that ran along its crest. Mileff straddled this path, compass-fashion, and pranced from side to side, indicating that now he was in Bulgaria, now in Turkey. It was the frontier line.

Presently, the path slid off down the mountain, away from Bulgaria, and we followed it. As we left the crest, I took one glance backward at the Bulgarian hills, so near and so safe. It was a preposterous fancy, but I already seemed to feel a difference in the air we breathed. There was something terrifying in the absolute silence, in the dark, rolling pine forests and the black hills, that wonderfully vivid sunset splashing their summits with lambent flame. I wished, involuntarily, for a moment, that we could turn back. A



THREE COMRADES-IN-ARMS.

logging-camp was not comfortable, perhaps, but it was at least safe.

Shooting a last sheaf of crimson darts into the sky, the sun dropped its burnished disc behind a range of hills, miles and miles away toward the Ægean. We entered the portals of the forest, and darkness shut us in, utter darkness that knew no noise, save the trickling of water in a rivulet, deep down at the bottom of a narrow gorge, and an occasional twitter of bird-life that was interspersed with the rattling of the leaves. Branches crumbled under-foot, and the pony lurched from side to side, beneath the load of heavy packs, sometimes bringing down torrents of blossoms from the flowering vines.

The trail wound steadily downward, and the trees grew more densely, and, seemingly, to a greater height. Although above us, on the hills, it was still but twilight, in the forest night had settled down. Only now and then, a stray beam of pale light, relic of the dying sun, flickered through the branches. The noise of the rivulet grew louder, and soon we were picking our way over the rough boulders in its bed. For half an hour or so we followed the stream, walled in by mighty cliffs, first on one side, and then on the other.

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Becoming more marked, the trail began to climb the cliff-wall again. A few feet up, it resolved into a mere ledge, clinging to the cliff. Marching was excessively dangerous. We pushed ahead, a foot at a time, feeling in front of us with our staffs, essential to progress in mountain climbing of this nature. The pony, in the rear, slipped and grunted and bumped into the chetniks who followed him. Once, he fell off the ledge and slipped part way to the bottom of the ravine. Fortunately, the descent at this place was not so steep as elsewhere, and he managed to save himself. But it was necessary for the rest of us to halt, and for several chetniks to take their lives in their hands, and risk his kicking their brains out, while they removed the packs from his back so that he could rise. After that, he had to be prodded back to the path and the packs replaced by candle-light. Candles were dangerous because they might be seen by enemies; however, it was quite impossible to manipulate clumsy packs in the darkness, on the edge of a precipice.

Before we had gone a quarter of a mile, after this, we came to a clean break in the ledge-path. There was an interval, ten or twelve feet across, of slippery gravel, sloping at an angle from the cliff. The rest of the trail had been washed away.

Looking over the edge, one could not see the bottom of the gorge. The sound of the rivulet came up very faintly. None of the chetniks was particularly anxious to lead the way over this obstruction. Nicola would have done so, but he was too big and unwieldy to risk it alone. Mileff snorted impatiently, held up a lighted candle, that he might judge the distance to the other side, backed off a few feet, and took a running jump. The candle in his hand flared through the darkness in an arc, and tumbled into the ravine beneath us. We heard an ejaculation from Mileff, and the sound of his body striking the cliff-wall across the gravel slope. The candle had gone down, but he had kept his footing.

With some one to catch him on the other side it was easy for Nicola to leap across; I followed, and the rest came in turn. I have always wondered how they contrived to get the pony over; we had to push on and leave the solution of that problem to the rear-guard. They did succeed, and without a great amount of trouble, for they were not delayed.

The cheta had been marching for several hours, when a patch of sky showed above us, and we found ourselves on a bare mountain-flank. The ravine coiled away like a huge snake, indicated

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by a more intense gash of oblivion in the gloom. It was not a dark night, though. Indeed, quite the contrary. There was a full harvest moon climbing up the sky, and myriads of white stars speckled the heavens. A chilly wind was blowing, and our clothes, soaked with perspiration from the hard march, clung to us, clammy.

Mileff motioned for a halt, and we sat in a huddled group, sheltered by a boulder the size of a house. A violent desire to sneeze asserted itself, and I threw my head back to indulge in it with childish satisfaction. "Ker"—the first part of it was just sounding, when a strong hand was clapped over my mouth, and the remainder of that sneeze died a strangled and unnatural death. I looked up with some resentment into Mileff's face, on which was a broad grin, while his forefinger was raised in warning. He wagged it solemnly, and indicated that I should listen.

The night had seemed devoid of noise till then. Now, a far-off clamouring struck my ear, the barking of dogs, a dim confused shouting—the noise that many men make.

"Ssh," said Mileff. "Turk! Turk askare."

Slowly and using exquisite care, we crept down the mountain. There was no such thing as a trail visible. We followed wherever Nicola led, the

chetniks moving with the long, swinging gait of the born mountaineer, that I have already referred to. It covers ground at a considerable rate. At last, we came to a field, dotted with clumps of bushes. Crouching nearly double, Nicola led the way into it. I wondered, even while I mimicked him, why he should assume such a posture. In a minute I knew.

As I sank to the ground near him, beneath a bush, a voice called in long, wailing tones, almost beside us, it seemed. "Eee-ee-eee-ee-e-ee," it called, and then there came a clank of arms—the kind of noise a rifle makes, when it is shifted from one arm to the other. My finger mechanically unlocked the hammer of my rifle, and I rolled behind a small stone. Mileff smiled as he had before, and motioned for silence.

"Turk," he breathed into my ear. "It is a Turk sentinel. But there is no danger. He is a hundred feet away. Be quiet. He is calling to the next sentinel beyond him. We must wait until the grand patrol passes. Then the Turks go to bed and we can march more safely. Make no noise."

On hands and knees, the other chetniks crawled up beside us. The pony also appeared to realise the necessity for quiet, and his small hoofs made

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no sound in the soft dirt, as he grazed in the shelter of the bushes, at the end of a short tether. His master, I noticed, had a strip of cloth ready to use as a muzzle, should he start to whinny. The chetniks lay in a row, wrapped in their voluminous rain-cloaks, their rifles carefully covered from the dew.

For myself, I could not lie comfortably, and the occasional, long-drawn howls of the sentinel, answered by other howls that died away down the valley, made me decidedly nervous. Finally, the silence became unbearable and I turned to Mileff, hoping he would whisper something. He was snoring, gently, with his mouth open. So were all the others, except Nicola, who sat, cross-legged, his rifle in his lap, and grinned at me, motioning to his eyes, in sign that I should sleep.

That settled it. I made up my mind that if Macedonian chetniks could sleep, with a Turkish askare less than a city block away, I could, too. And I did. I was surprised that it was so easy. In two minutes, I was napping as peacefully as a child in a cradle. I must have slept for half an hour or more, when my brain became aware of a confused jumble of noises, somewhere in the outside world. Then a man prodded me in the ribs, and I turned over with a sleepy ejaculation.

The chetniks all about me were on their knees, their rifles in their hands.

The howling of our neighbour, the sentinel, had merged into an approaching chorus of howls, and a tremendous din of clashing arms and marching men. Dogs barked everywhere; bugles shrieked and there was a distant throbbing of drums. I marked that our pony had been muzzled. The chetniks were strung out in line, behind bushes and boulders, crouching low. A broad grin overspread Dodor's face; he scented his maiden fight. Mileff wormed himself over the grass to my side.

"It is the patrol," he whispered. "They will soon pass. There is little chance that they will see us, but it is well to be careful."

And he tapped his rifle, significantly. The clamour drew nearer, until it was exactly opposite our position, apparently at the post of the sentinel who had entertained us during the wait. We could not see the askares, because it would have been sure betrayal to raise a head above the tops of the bushes, but we could hear them with most uncomfortable distinctness.

The strain upon one's nerves was anything but pleasant. The Turks appeared to take hours, making up their minds to move on, from one

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sentry post to the next, and in the interval they made the night hideous with their cries, which was probably one reason why they did not discover us. For minutes, after they had marched on, the clamour came back to us, growing fainter and fainter, until it was extinguished in a medley of barks, where a patch of light on the sky-line indicated the village of Granitza.

I looked at my watch. It lacked a few minutes of ten o'clock, so we must have been on the march, already, a matter of five hours. Mileff rose cautiously to his feet and glanced around the field, perfectly clear in the silvery moonlight. Apparently, our neighbour, or his relief, had become sleepy, for his presence was only made noticeable by an incidental clash of metal, possibly a canteen rubbing against a bayonet sheath. He was not to be seen. This was not strange, for a Turkish sentinel soon learns to avoid standing forth conspicuously, when he is on night duty in Macedonia.

"Heidi," murmured Mileff, and the chetniks fell into shadowy column behind him. We no longer marched; we flitted from bush to bush and from rock to rock. When a patch of moonlit meadow was encountered, we crossed, one at a time, at long intervals, in order that the sentinels

on the surrounding hills might not have their attention called to moving black shadows. The fields we crossed were both cultivated and uncultivated, overgrown with weeds. Several times we passed monuments of desolation, heaps of blackened timbers that had once been houses. A ridge of serrated, rambling hills ran along one side of the fields, a few hundred yards off. They were surmounted by a straggling line of half-naked pine-trees that sighed softly in the wind. When we passed one of the serrations in the ridge, we instinctively ducked, for the moonlight poured through in a mellow flood. It was at such times that a stirring bush seemed an askare, and the crack of a branch, the opening of a breech.

Climbing a stone-wall, tumble-down and desolate as the deserted fields, we entered a thick forest of undergrowth and scrub trees, through which the path ramified aimlessly. Branches hung down to strike one's face, and thorns tore hands and clothing. A luckless chetnik dropped his rifle, and Mileff swore fluently in guttural Bulgarian. We emerged into a small clearing, in the middle of which stood two trees, distinguishable by their height from those that surrounded them. Mileff stepped up to one, reached into a hole in the trunk and extracted a curiously

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twisted piece of iron. This he deposited in the trunk of the second tree. It was a private signal, to the Bulgarians of the district, that the cheta had passed so far in safety.

On the other side of the clearing, we came to a waggon-bridge over a creek. The bridge was shaded by trees and bushes, but it creaked terribly as we put foot to it. Also, it swayed dangerously under the weight of a man, and Mileff judged it best to send the pack-pony up-stream, a short distance, to a ford. But the pony took great delight in splashing the water, so that he really made as much noise as he would have made crossing the bridge. He got curses for his pains, and a prod from Nicola's gun-barrel.

Before us was a wide expanse of open savannah, stretching away to a second forest, that clung to the foot-hills of a range of mountains, even higher than the two ranges we had already traversed. Each man folded his cloak around him, so that, barring his rifle, the metal of his equipment could not refract the moonbeams, and followed Mileff at the double.

It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the humour of that scene. It was not exactly humorous to us, at the time, but I think any one privileged to behold us—any one with a Western

sense of the ridiculous—must have held his sides for mirth. To me, it seemed like some schoolboy escapade. I expected any minute to hear one of the masters say “here, boys, this has gone far enough. Return to your rooms.”

But no master appeared, and we trotted on, panting and perspiring, yet getting closer to the mountains, with every stride. As we began the ascent of the first of the foot-hills, our difficulties increased. The hillside was bare of shrubbery and covered with short grass. A light dew had fallen, and this had made the grass as slippery as ice. In boots, it would have been almost useless to attempt to run over such a surface. It was hard enough in sandals. Men fell repeatedly.

Suddenly, as we were toiling up a steep trail on the flank of the upper slopes of the mountain, a single shot was fired in the valley below. Simultaneously, there came up to us the crashing of drums and a sputtering crackle of rifle-fire. The rolling echoes of the musketry persisted for perhaps a minute, and then sank into a dropping succession of individual reports. It was too far off to have been caused by a discovery of our presence, but in the first feeling of surprise that possessed every man, we did not realise that. Without a word of command from Mileff, the cheta

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quickenied its pace and ran up the hill, until it could run no farther.

The cause of the disturbance, I never found out. It may have been a false alarm at an outpost; it may have been a descent by raiding Bashi-bazouks on some isolated farm-house. Such things happen frequently in Macedonia. At any rate, we pressed on more quickly for it. Looking back, now, I am still astonished at our success in breasting that mountain in the dark. If it were not that many times afterward, I was present at similar feats, I would be disposed to doubt my own memory.

Very shortly, the path disappeared altogether and we merely zigzagged upward toward the summit, making a few feet with every effort. Fallen tree-trunks encumbered the ground; slippery patches of gravel sent men crashing on their faces; vines reached out from beneath rocks, to trip one up in passing. Once in a while, a man gave out temporarily, and the cheta sat in a group around him, until he recovered his wind. It seemed a waste of effort—this scaling of a wild mountainside. But what else could be done, when the enemy held every highroad and trail of importance, radiating from the frontier?

Throughout these hours of climbing the pony



A GORGE IN THE RHODOPES.

pursued his own sweet way. If, perchance, he became tired, he contrived to lie down in his tracks, no matter where he might be. I remember how, once, having dropped behind to readjust my sandal-straps, I was held up for ten minutes because he had chosen to recline on the edge of a precipice, and one had the choice of stepping out into space or over him. Either method possessed peculiar dangers. Ultimately, it became necessary for us to remove his packs and distribute a large portion of their contents among the party.

The sky in the east was paling slightly, with the first signs of the dawn, when we dragged ourselves laboriously onto the summit. The moon had disappeared, but myriads of stars twinkled like diamond dust among the fleecy clouds. Around and beneath us tumbled a vast expanse of mountains, purple in the dimness. Just visible, the Bulgarian frontier range which we had first crossed, loomed a threatening shadow on the horizon. And before us, spread out like a map in a geography, lay the valley of Rhodope. Rivers traced their silvery courses between dark piles of forest and undergrowth, and, at intervals, the wilderness was broken by groups of lights that were villages, and camp-fires, marking the location of bodies of troops.

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Mileff checked them off on his fingers—Silyotz village, such-and-such a battalion of infantry, such-and-such a battery. Off on one hand, we made out a huge glare of light, that leaped and danced fitfully, as if the devil's bellows were at work. It was probably the scene of the disturbance which had hastened our ascent of the mountain. The entire surface of the valley was so distinct that it seemed impossible that the sentinels who stood watch beside those camp-fires could not see us, as well. A murmur rose up to us, softened by distance,—the tinkle of cow-bells, the barking of dogs, and a turgid medley of noises, through which pulsed the occasional throbbing of drums and the plaintive wailing of lonely sentries, calling to let their comrades know that they were still alive.

For a few minutes, we rested in the chilly air of the mountain-top. Then Nicola rose to his feet and we resumed the trail. The rest of the march was a nightmare of fatigue. We marched on and on, across endless vistas of mountains and moors, shivering in our own sweat. We came to know the bitter feeling of utter exhaustion—the exhaustion which a man shakes from his shoulders only by the spasmodic and wholly primitive instinct of emulation. You refuse to give up;

that is all. Others are doing what you are doing. While they last, you feel that you can do so, too. And you press your teeth together and toil on, while a pain racks your head and the pounding of an overworked heart gives almost physical agony.

On and on, we marched through the half-light. We passed across broad reaches of sea-grass, to dive into thickets, innocent of path or trail, and then by narrow sheep-tracks, along precarious mountain-spurs, razor-backed, sloping steeply away on either hand, into the green depths of fathomless valleys. A man fell and lay motionless for a few moments. Sometimes, he picked himself up; sometimes, his comrades, missing him, retraced their steps, and helped him to his feet.

One time, on a desolate plateau, we stepped from a thicket into the midst of a group of log-huts. The chetniks stopped dead, like pointers when they scent a covey. The hammer-locks clicked sharply in the forest silence. But the huts gaped empty and deserted. The feeling in the air was sufficient to tell one that the clearing had not known man's presence for months.

Nicola suggested that it would be a good plan to make use of these huts, but Mileff said no. He had a lingering hope that we might be able

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to reach the village of Etempe in the farther hills, to which the askares seldom penetrate, before dawn. So we tramped on, down gullies and ravines and steep declivities, where the easiest thing to do was to lie on one's back and slide to the bottom—tired legs were unable to uphold the load of ammunition and arms any longer.

Another time, crossing a wide stretch of moorland on a mountain-top, we saw, far in advance of us, what looked like the stone lodge-gate of a gentleman's country-seat. An avenue of stately pines curved back from it and disappeared in the forest. I rubbed my eyes in amazement. Macedonia is not Scotland or the Adirondacks. Could it be a midnight mirage? When, at last, we gained the stone columns, I found that they were rough, unhewn boulders of rock, forming a natural portal, and the avenue was naught but the path that a by-gone storm had torn for itself in the forest aisles.

Toward four o'clock, we had gained the foot-hills again, and dawn was imminent. It was certain, now, that we could not get to Etempe before daylight broke, and Mileff cast about for a convenient camping-place. Camping in the open, in this part of Macedonia, so near the plain, was a dangerous business, but to continue the march would have been foolish. The chetniks were worn

out and in no condition to face possible enemies. A rest was imperative. Bidding the rest of us stay where we were, Mileff and Nicola started on an exploring expedition, from which they presently returned with cheering news. They had found just the place for a camp—a gully, shut in above and on every side by trees, where we could risk a fire.

The comfort of a fire was something we had not expected, and in our exhausted condition, it was more than welcome. Inside of five minutes we had a blaze started, and after a drink of water at the brook that brawled through the glen, we rolled up in our cloaks and went to sleep. There was no attempt to station sentries; not a man was capable of staying awake a minute longer. We were worn out. The last recollection I have of that awful night, is a glimpse of a spark, darting across my range of vision, from the crackling brushwood on the fire, which I took for a shooting-star.

CHAPTER VII

MARCHING THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS

A BEAM of sunshine, slipping through the tree-boughs, fell full on my face, and as I opened my eyes, my nostrils were choked with a cloud of pungent wood-smoke. I hastily rolled over to windward of the fire, where Andrea, on his knees, was roasting bacon on a sliver of pine. He chuckled at my discomfiture, and produced more bacon from his pack. Instantly, I was busy beside him, for until that minute I had not realised how hungry I was.

The bacon sizzled and smoked, and I placed a bit of coarse klepb beneath it, to catch the dripping grease. The camp looked quite homelike. Mileff and Nicola still snored peacefully at one side, and half a dozen chetniks were down by the pool, enjoying a wash. On the hillside I caught a glint of light from a rifle-barrel, where a self-appointed sentry stood guard. Andrea chuckled again, and invited me to come down to the pool. Nothing loathe, I gobbled my bacon and bread and followed

him, and soon we were all splashing around like so many schoolboys.

I have had occasion to use that metaphor before, in connection with my story, so perhaps it would be well for me to say a word concerning the chetnik as a type—a word that will explain why one uses such a simile to describe a person of so stern a calling.

They are a race by themselves—these Macedonia chetniks. All young, hardy, and intelligent, they are the pick of the Bulgar stock. Since the days of the crusades, of Cœur de Lion and Scanderbeg, no more romantic type has evolved itself in the tangled meshes of the world's history. Their lives are dedicated to their country. They do not know the meaning of the word fear; in a sense this is literal, for I have spent several hours trying to impress upon one of them a definition of the word. They hate the Turks with a hatred so intense that it is splendid; it becomes a part of their creed.

In Western Europe, it is common to hear the chetniks spoken of as so many gangs of brigands. So far as the Servian and Greek bands are concerned, this may be true. I should not wonder if it is. But throughout my intercourse with the Bulgarian chetniks, I never noted a single case

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of brigandage, or intimidation, or treachery, or deceit. They were kinder to me than any set of men I have ever known. There was not a member of the band I was with who would not have given his life for me—ay, and given it cheerfully, too. It was not the fault of several that they did not lose their lives in saving mine.

Among each other, they are wonderfully gentle—with the usual exceptions. But it is in time of battle they show up to best advantage. There seems to be an unwritten code among them, that no man is to consider his own life, when the life of a comrade is in peril. And what magnificent fighters they are! It is a sight such as makes life worth living, to see one of them holding off three askares from a wounded comrade. The Turks fear them with a fear that is often comic. They never attack a cheta except with vastly overpowering force. As for the chetniks—they think nothing of attacking twice their number. In an earlier chapter, I have referred to the exploit of the Detcheff cheta which held a village for weeks against an army of 30,000 Turks, and then escaped, with a majority of its strength of sixty men.

In their outward appearance, it is true, the chetniks are more like the brigands of the stage,

than modern soldiers. They wear their hair long, in flowing locks, of which they are very proud and take great care. They keep their weapons in perfect order, and like to carry as many revolvers and knives as they can find room for in their belts—not for effect, let it be understood, but because the more revolvers a man has, the more shots he has at his disposal in a *mêlée*. Many of them have little trinkets, jewelry, and so forth, of which they are exceedingly vain.

In many ways, too, they are nothing but school-boys, reckless, volatile, quick-tempered, and whimsical. They have a peculiarly harmless vanity, which manifests itself in a liking for having their pictures taken, and flattery. Most of them are handsome beggars, and they know it; their muscles are hardened and their frames trained down to the last ounce of flesh. But they care nothing for women. Such as are married seldom see their families after they have dedicated their lives to Macedonia. Their wives and children are looked after by relatives, willing to help along the holy purpose of fighting the Turk. The pleasures of the flesh have small hold on a *chetnik*. I have never seen one drunk and they do not even use tobacco inordinately.

Perhaps it is not too much to say, that they

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are the nearest to a survival of the ancient monastic orders of knighthood that we have in the world, to-day. Their lives are devoted to a single purpose, from which they never swerve. With the exception of some of the leaders, they are enthusiastic Christians. And they are an anomaly that must surely pass swiftly, when it has served its turn.

As we were swimming around in the pool, from the mountainside came the crack of a *Männlicher*. We lost no time in exclamations. We were out on the bank and into our clothing, "in less time than it takes to tell it." Of course, our rifles were handy. We slung on the heavy ammunition pouches, loaded down with clips of cartridges, and started up the hill, as fast as we could trot, fixing our bayonets as we ran.

Panting from the stiff climb, the water still clinging to our eyelashes, we burst out into the clearing, where stood the sentry watching the surrounding country through a hole in the foliage opening on the valley. Beside him stood Mileff, a broad grin on his face and the rifle still smoking in his hand. Nicola was rolling on the ground in hysterics, and the sentry was in no condition to face askares.

We looked sheepish and demanded an elucidation.

tion. Between spasms, Mileff explained that he had decided to signal to the militia look-outs from the near-by villages, who always mount guard on the hills, that we were near. According to the regular code of signals employed by the insurgents in that district, one rifle-shot meant that the cheta was in hiding, and wanted to talk with its friends. As quickly as they could get in touch with us, the peasants would answer.

“And we shall not bother about going to Etempe,” added Mileff, “we might as well press on to the next village—Kovatchavishta.”

During the rest of the day, we lay on a sunny spot on the hillside and slept. Mileff climbed into a tall tree and swept the horizon for traces of Turkish troops, and Nicola went off at noon on a scouting expedition. They failed to find any indications of askares in the neighbourhood, however. At five o'clock in the afternoon, we started for Kovatchavishta.

At first we had a very fair trail over mountainsides and moors. The scenery was beautiful, in the sunset glow that played over the jagged rocks and dark peaks. A valley that we passed through, carpeted with pale yellow ferns, was a prismatic field of different hues, flashing against the crimson and pink sky. As we advanced into

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the mountains again, the scenery became more wild and rugged. On a ridge, we came to a curious pile of monolithic stones, some monument of a "forgotten race," forming a travesty of a house.

In a field, not far from this place, we found a board, rudely shaped like a gun, fastened to a tree. It was one of the secret signs of the insurgents, and indicated that a cheta had passed, recently, probably on its way to the southern raon of Drama. We were clustered about this sign, when an exclamation escaped from Dodor's lips. Mileff swung on his heel and his eyes followed the boy's outstretched finger. A tiny dot was moving rapidly forward over the fields from the west. As we looked, it waved a hand and broke into a jog-trot.

"A look-out," said Mileff. "Good. Now, we shall hear some news. Soon we shall know whether we may sleep under cover to-night, or spend the hours in 'le Balkan.' "

Five minutes afterward, we were clustered around the peasant, an old, grey-bearded man, but of extraordinary vitality and energy, dressed in tight-fitting trousers and fur-lined shepherd's cloak. He told his tale to Mileff, with many gestures. There were no troops in Kovatcha-

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vishta at present, but we could not travel thither by the main roads because patrols of Bashi-bazouks had been seen on them recently. It would be necessary to climb the mountain-trails. This was no more than we had expected, for the chetniks seldom travel by the highroads, unless they are in large numbers and looking for a fight. Nicola and the peasant held a brief talk, comparing notes of trails and landmarks. His memory freshened, Nicola shook hands with him, and the old fellow went down the line, giving us each a hearty grip and an "os bogu" ("farewell; your health"). The last we saw of him, he was striding across the moors toward a gap in the mountains, where he could strike a decent road that would take him to Kovatchavishta several hours ahead of us—for whom the real work of the march was yet to come.

Night fell as we were struggling through a forsaken mountain pass. Small stones and pebbles cluttered the trail, rendering the footing precarious in the extreme. One's feet ached from the constant pounding of the rocky track. They were not sore; but they ached, as if they had been beaten with clubs. We craved water all the time, and the stray springs beside the trail were mighty welcome. These springs were strange sights,

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in such a wilderness as the Rhodopes. They were bricked up artificially, and often had rude saints' figures carved in the rock beside them. The people of Kovatchavishta are of a strong religious turn of mind.

We descended a succession of terraces on the flank of a mountain, and after a couple of hours of slipping and sliding, were rewarded by a glimpse of the lights of the village, tucked away in a corner of the foot-hills. It looked very near—a few minutes' march, at most, but as a matter of fact, it was an hour later, before we even reached the surface of the valley.

On the lower slopes, the road was bordered with ploughed fields, each guarded by a rude stone wall. Here and there we passed an out-house, likewise built of stone, massive and ponderous. They have a way of building without mortar, in Macedonia, that gives an impression of everlasting durability and strength to the wanderer. Sometimes, in passing one of these barns, the cattle inside would bellow inquiringly. Then a dog barked. Instantly, a second dog barked, a third joined in, a fourth, and the village was alive with the howls of excited curs.

The first dog was loose and he ran toward us from an opening in the outer line of village houses.

Standing on a mound of filth, he raised his head to the moon and bayed defiantly at us. In the still quiet of the mountains with the rocks all about to multiply the echoes, a bark like that can be heard for miles. Andrea swore volubly and started for the dog with his hand on his revolver. Mileff grabbed him. We were all of us unstrung by fatigue, and left alone, we were quite capable of doing foolish things on the spur of the moment. It would have imperilled, not only our own lives, but the lives of the sleeping villagers, to have fired a single shot.

A volley of stones sufficed to send the dog yelping into the oblivion of a farm-yard, and unheeding of the complaints of his friends we pressed on, turning into the first street we came to. Boulders the size of a man strewed it at intervals, between the dark house-walls that rose on either hand. Down its middle ran an open sewer. The houses were gloomy and unbroken by windows larger than loop-holes. The village was almost mournfully quiet, like a collection of tombs instead of houses. The sole noise was the howling of the dogs—and that was anything but a cheerful sound.

We stumbled up and down the streets, barking our shins and cursing fate, in search of a certain

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house, where we were to be received. Apparently, the house was not. We could not find it. Finally Mileff and Nicola went off by themselves on a still-hunt, leaving us in a small meadow. We sat shivering, and reflected upon the sufferings of life in general and the uncertainties of conspiring in particular. We were not happy.

To us, in this frame of mind, came Mileff, Nicola, and one other, who was introduced to us in whispers as our host for the night. It seems he, like many others, had been awakened by the uproar of our approach, and after several minutes' waiting had arrived at the sensible conclusion that we were lost, whereupon he started out to find the cheta. In doing so, by the way, he nearly lost his life, for, happening to emerge rather suddenly around a dark corner into the arms of Mileff and Nicola, those worthies, having learned by experience to act first and speak afterward, presented their revolvers at his head. We all smiled over the story, as we filed behind him along another street, which, strange to say, we had not travelled—a fact that shows how little first impressions are worth at night, in strange places.

Our new friend, whose name was Gurgeff, cautioned us to keep within the shadows cast by the houses, and to make no noise to arouse the



NICOLA THE COURIER.

dogs, which had relaxed their vocal efforts. He reiterated what the look-out had told us—that scouts had seen Bashi-bazouks on the neighbouring hills, during the week, and that it was well to be careful. With bated breath and the hasty movements of stage conspirators, we slipped through the shadows after him. He kept far ahead of the column, so that the leader just had a glimpse of a vague shadow, flitting on in the distance.

We had travelled up and down hill for possibly five minutes, when the guide disappeared—disappeared completely, as if he had been drawn into the ground. Puzzled for a minute, we pressed on. Two hundred feet farther, and a hiss came to us from a house on the right. We swung round; a crack showed in a gateway, and a hand motioned to us to enter. One by one we slipped in.

Cattle, mules, goats, sheep, and a horse or two stood about us, evincing a sleepy surprise at the unexpected influx of strangers. A girl was poised on the lower step of a steep stairway, half-ladder, shading a candle with her hand. By its light, I had a chance to see that we were in a high-walled courtyard, around two sides of which ran the house. The girl smiled warmly upon the chetniks, and muttered a greeting. She was not a pretty

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girl, in any sense of the word, but there was something about the mere fact of seeing a woman in such a place, at such a time, and under such circumstances, that made one feel more comfortable. One was sure, then, that one was not in a fantastical shadow-world, from which, eventually, one would awake, perhaps, unpleasantly.

So the girl stood there and smiled, and we all smiled back—a dozen or so dirty, long-haired, tired men, who a minute before would have torn in pieces their best friends, had they evinced merriment at them. Gurgeff spoke to her, sharply, and she waved her hand to the stairs, leading the way herself, her scanty, home-spun skirt flapping about her bare ankles. Pushing back a crazy trap-door, she held the light high over her head, so that we could find the worn rungs, and let us see the uneven floor of the balcony on which we stood, and the strings of herbs and onions that waved above, among the roof rafters. A door stood open at the opposite end of the gallery, and into this she marshalled us. We followed meekly.

The room was quite large, at least twenty feet square, and along the sides were strips of matting, with coarse pillows ranged against the walls. Before this, I had not realised how thoroughly

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Oriental Macedonia is, in many ways. Beds are a luxury one does not find, outside of the larger towns. The room was solidly built of stone, covered with plaster, and the beams of the roof were of a heavy dark wood. A fireplace was to one side, and on the wall was a glass-panelled cabinet, containing a number of ikons. Before this, several of the chetniks crossed themselves devoutly.

Tired as we were, we dumbly threw off our packs and lay flat on our backs on the matting strips, watching our host and the women of the family—his wife, mother, and two daughters—bring in a low stand, which they placed in the centre of the room. It was not more than six inches high, and only when a large bowl of steaming-hot soup was placed on it, did I understand that it was meant for a table. Macedonians are good cooks, and we made that soup, and the beautifully cooked rice and whey that followed it, disappear as if by enchantment. After that, we unbuckled our cartridge belts, rolled up in our cloaks, and went to sleep.

In the morning, when I got up, the life of the village was in full swing. Looking through a loop-hole in the wall, I saw women washing clothes in a stream that flowed across the valley, beyond

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the houses, and on the hill-slopes sheep, goats, and cattle grazed peacefully. A little knot of men were clustered at the end of the street in front of the church, a handsome building of white stone, and girls were trotting back and forth from and to the fountain, tall jugs poised on their heads. It was hard to believe that war could threaten such idyllic surroundings.

Many of the chetniks were up, and I stepped out upon the gallery to see what could be done in the way of washing. Water did not seem to be plentiful, and one speedily learns to be previous in things that are scarce. The one tin hand-basin, poised on a dilapidated sink, was in use, so I stepped to the gallery railing, where an unobstructed view could be had across the house-tops of the village to the mountains facing the ones we had travelled. I was admiring the scenery, when Mileff came over to me, and pulled me behind a blanket, hung so as to obscure the doorway to the room we occupied.

"You must not show yourself on the gallery," he said, excitedly. "It is not safe. There are Bashi-bazouks in the hills; perhaps they are watching the village, now. They can tell a chetnik from a villager a long way off, and if they were to see you, it would not be long before a

raiding party would descend upon Kovatchavishta, and our friends have their throats cut. You must be careful."

I was, after that. In fact, I always thought twice about looking out of windows.

In the course of the day, many people came in to see the chetniks—all men, save a few old women. They usually brought some presents for us, in the way of delicacies to eat, fruit, or sugar. Several brought heaping baskets of most luscious grapes. I was much impressed by the evident hold the revolutionists had upon the people. Even the children were trusted implicitly. Mileff talked freely with the various visitors, playing the part of a spell-binder. The work of administrative voivode is anything if not complex. Besides being a fighting man, he must be an orator of some force, in order to keep the spirit of revolt aflame in the breasts of the laggards; he must have a knowledge of medicine, of agriculture, of simple engineering, and of many things else.

So Mileff was busy at work until dinner time. That dinner was an extraordinary meal. As a preliminary move, they brought in the low table, which had served before, and around this we clustered, each man drawing out his pocket-knife, if he had one; if not, his bayonet. A bustle was heard at the

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door and in marched mine host, himself, staggering under the weight of an enormous platter, on which was a sheep, roasted whole, in its own gravy, brown and tempting. This he proudly deposited on the table, and then stood off, admiringly, his hands on his hips.

Kortser, who was our premier culinary artist, at a sign from the chief, took up his bayonet and began skilfully to dissect the sheep, with much spattering of gravy and fragments. Having been divided up into convenient portions, the meat was seized upon by the guests and held daintily in the hands, while we contested to see who would finish first. For the other courses, there were sweetened rice and whey. Most of the chetniks took a pull at the mastica bottle, as well, but mastica is something a Westerner finds it difficult to appreciate.

That night, after supper, we moved on again, but the journey this time was very short—only to the other end of the village, to the house of Gurgeff's brother-in-law. The chief had not sufficiently completed his plans and arrangements for us to move to a different village. On the next morning, many men came in from the outlying farms to see the voivode. They sat in a circle on the gallery, hidden from spies by curtains, and

talked for hours. Man after man got up and spoke, and then listened gravely to Mileff's reply. They were the revolutionary committee of the village, and the chiefs of the militia which is organised in most of the Bulgar villages.

Some of them had grievances to report, of one kind or another. Some had requests to make, or suggestions, or complained against their neighbours; every man, in his turn, stood up, and made orderly speech, in a distinctly disorderly manner. For Mileff was holding nothing less than a court of justice—he, an outlaw, proscribed and hunted, with a price upon his head. Instead of going to the recognised rulers of the land, to whom they paid their regular taxes, these men preferred to go to the revolutionary voivode and pay an additional tax, in order to make possible his organisation.

When all the other chiefs had spoken, and told of the conditions in their villages, the number of men they could muster, how many rifles they had secreted, how many rounds of ammunition, one of the representatives of Kovatchavishta rose. He had waited until the last, he said, because the others knew his story and were united upon it. It was the most important piece of news they had to tell.

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Last week, he continued, a squad of Bashi-bazouks, eight strong, had ridden down to the village and requisitioned twenty head of horses and cattle. When the headmen had protested, the Bashi-bazouks laughed at and insulted them. Further protests angered them, and at the muzzles of their rifles they had seized whatever they chose and ridden off with it, declaring their intention to come again and take more.

"And next time we shall take other things," the leader had said, significantly.

As a result, the villagers were in fear of their lives. They appealed to the chetniks for aid. Could not this nest of Bashi-bazouks, which had been preying upon the country-side for the past year, be wiped out? Mileff considered and called Nicola into conference. They talked for several minutes, while the villagers watched them anxiously. "What force of militia can you lend me?" inquired Mileff, after a short conversation.

"There are eight of these Bashi-bazouks you say," he went on. "Very well. We will wipe them out, but I must have plenty of men, because I do not wish to lose any. Where is their post?"

The villagers replied that the Bashi-bazouks had taken possession of a house in the near-by village of Osikovo. It was strongly built of stone

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and had a high wall around it. A night attack would be the best and safest way to destroy them. One of the committee drew a diagram on the floor, showing how the house should be surrounded on all sides and cut off from communication. Mileff studied it.

"Give me fifteen men, and I will do it," he said, at last. "How soon can they be ready?"

The committeemen looked happy, and the chetniks, eavesdropping at the door of their room, poked each other in the ribs.

"To-night," said the chief of the committee, a stalwart greybeard of seventy. "You shall have the pick of our young men—anything, so long as you rid us of these pests, who would make a desert of our village."

Just at this point in the conversation, Andrea and Dodor rolled out of the doorway, in the heat of a joyous pummelling match, sweeping through a section of the council-ring, and effectually breaking up the conversation. Instead of being angry, four of the gravest-looking of the village elders grabbed them jovially by their feet and suspended them, heads down, despite their fervent kicking.

"Come, Smeat," said Mileff to me, after the last of his visitors had gone, "let us see to our rifles.

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There will be much to do to-night, and all should be ready. The moon will be out, I think, and, heidi, we shall march for 'le Balkan' and the Turks. Heidi!"

"Heidi," repeated the chetniks clustered around him, and Dodor broke softly into the throbbing *Makedonsky March!* Seated in a circle, cross-legged, Andrea accompanying them on a broken guitar he had found in a corner of the room, they sang it softly, over and over again, repeating each of the many verses. And afterward they combed their hair, so that if they had to die, they might die clean and decently.



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE OF GHERMAN.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ATTACK ON THE BASHI-BAZOUKS

It was very dark going down the ladder-stairs that night, and the last thing that I saw, as I backed through the trap in the floor, was the girl with the slim ankles, standing motionless, as she had stood before, a smoky lamp held high, and her eyes shining with unshed tears. Below me, a goat stirred uneasily, and the equipments of the chetnik next in line rattled softly. There was a heavy, over-powering odour of cow-dung.

We slipped into the court-yard and stood in a group about Mileff, while he whispered his instructions for the night to the several sub-chiefs. The small enclosure was packed with men in long cloaks, which were blown aside by the wind, now and then, revealing glistening rifles and belts of serried cartridges. But they were quiet—unnaturally quiet. None spoke above a whisper, and the sandals made no noise on the stones.

I noticed that perfect comradeship prevailed. The chetniks crowded up to the knot of chiefs and

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craned over their shoulders like children, eager to hear what was being discussed. They readily made way for me, and the militiamen whispered among themselves, pointing at my smooth face—considered an affliction in Macedonia—"Americansky," they muttered. Others crowded up to see the strange being from another land, and soon I found myself in the heart of the cheta—which was what I wanted.

Mileff turned and introduced me briefly to the chief of the militiamen, a big, lusty young fellow, who gripped my hand in his sinewy fingers, and muttered "Nos dravey," a phrase that means something like, "Your good health, sir." The sub-chiefs of the cheta, Nicola and Andrea, grinned at me joyfully. They were more like children than ever. In chuckling murmurs, they tried to describe to me what was going to happen to the Bashi-bazouks. Mileff laughed at them and pulled me aside.

"We march at once," he explained. "Until we reach Osikovo, we shall keep together. At Osikovo, we shall divide. Andrea, with ten men, will circle the village and come down on it from the hills in the rear. The rest of us will attack from the front."

He turned to the chetniks.

"It is time. Where is the guide?"

A tall youth pushed his way through the throng, tossing a Männlicher over his shoulder.

"I am the guide, voivode," he said, saluting respectfully. I could not help observing that while the chetniks were as familiar with their chief as with each other, to the militiamen he was a superior person, one who not only had attained fame and dignity, by the blows he had dealt the Turks, but who had been across the mountains to the Frank towns, where he had learned much wisdom out of books. It is strange how a people, with whom books are rare, look up to the possessors of them. I have seen villagers sit for hours, listening to Mileff reading from one of the Russian authors. But all this is far from the court-yard of the house in Kovatchavishta.

Mileff spoke a sharp word of command to the chetniks and militiamen, and they fell into single file behind him, the chetniks being scattered at intervals among the more numerous militiamen. Gurgeff took down the great wooden bar which held the gate, and the guide glided out. Giving him five seconds' lead, Mileff followed and the rest of the long line behind him. There was no moon in the sky, so we had to absolutely feel our way along the village street. If one had a sharp ear,

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it was possible to keep out of the brook-sewer that occupied the middle of the road; otherwise, the result was unpleasant.

There was never a noise in the sleeping village. This time the dogs had been securely muzzled. Looking back along the line, one could only realise the presence of the cheta by occasional vague sounds and moving dots, that appeared and disappeared in the darkness. I could not see the guide at all, but Mileff, just ahead of me, with his cat's eyes, had no difficulty in following him.

Soon we had left the village behind, and began the ascent of the rocky hills that rose abruptly above the house-tops. It was the same road we had descended previously, and if it had been hard to climb down, it was twice as difficult to climb up. Many times, we stopped for necessary rest, and each time I marvelled that the Bashi-bazouks had possessed the courage to dare such a journey for a few trivial cattle. Near the head of the trail, we were challenged sharply by a squad of figures that rose suddenly from the shelter of a boulder.

By the light of a star or two in the gloomy black heavens, we could see their rifle-barrels thrown athwart the stones, and we halted. They were the militia patrol, who mounted guard at the

head of the mountain-road, day and night, to ward against the coming of the askares. The Bashi-bazouks who had come the week before had been allowed to pass because their small numbers were a guarantee that they could not do much harm. Against a larger force, the village would have risen to the last man.

At a word from the guide, supplemented by an exclamation from Mileff, the patrol lowered their rifles and stood forth in the mirk while we passed. To each one of us they spoke a hasty word of greeting, and then they sank back into the oblivion of the rocks, and we toiled on over a wide moor, covered with long grass that concealed the hollows, into which one's feet slipped unawares.

Sometimes the moors broke into sudden declivities, down which we half-climbed, half-slid. Stretches of sandy soil intervened, through which we ploughed heavily. The pace was a rapid one, for Mileff wished to get into position before midnight. Once, standing on a sort of tor that rose above the moor, I glanced backward at the line of figures that undulated as far as I could see, each one shrouded in its long sheepskin cloak, from which projected a rifle-barrel. It was marvellous how quiet and swift they were, moving over that

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rough, wild country, with not even a trail to guide them. Light-footed and sure of their movements as goats, they made no difficulty out of what required all my nerve and watchfulness.

Several times we stopped for a few minutes, while the guide went ahead to reconnoitre the way. Again, on a couple of occasions it was necessary to make detours around villages. Another time, we marched straight through a collection of huts—a small outlying Christian village. We made no noise and did not waken any one, however. We had been marching for perhaps three hours, when we came to a rude stone wall, sure sign that a village lay just beyond.

Mileff called softly to the guide and held a brief consultation with the sub-chiefs, after which we proceeded, more slowly. It was plain that we were entering a valley. The hills began to shut in on either side, and in front of us they narrowed so as to become a defile. Mileff detached a couple of men on the flanks to act as scouts, and we cautiously approached the portals of the valley, marching over a waggon-road, deserving of the name because deep ruts could be felt in its surface.

Presently, loomed up in the distance, a roof. Other roofs came into view and yet others. I leaped upon a boulder and looking down the valley,

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saw a long succession of roofs sloping up the hillside to the right of the road. We continued along the road, keeping just outside of the village. Dogs barked at intervals, but otherwise the silence was absolute. At a point opposite the centre of the village we halted, and Andrea passed down the line, picking out ten men whom he motioned to follow him. Without a word of farewell, they marched off into the night.

The rest of us lay down behind the wall and waited. I pulled my watch out and borrowed Mileff's electric hand-lamp. It was five minutes past midnight. The chetniks arranged their knapsacks under their heads, wrapped themselves in their cloaks, taking care to protect the breeches of their rifles from the moisture, and dozed off. But the militiamen did not sleep. They leaned on elbows and murmured to each other. You could see in their shining eyes the excitement that the prospect of the fight brought. With the chetniks it was too old a story to deprive a man of a nap.

For a long time, it seemed, nothing happened. The dogs barked infrequently, not at anything in particular, but just to make a noise. A wind sprang up that rustled the grass and the leaves of the trees beside the road rattled against

each other, drearily. In the distance, a night-bird croaked. Gradually, without knowing it, I dropped off to sleep, even as I had, when we were waiting at the frontier line for the Turkish patrol to pass.

I could not have closed more than one eye, for almost at once, I was awakened by the glare of Mileff's searchlight, inside his cloak. He was looking at his watch. I looked at mine. It was nearly one. Mileff rolled over and prodded me; taking the signal, I prodded the man next to me. So it passed down the line. We all rose to our knees and re-slung our knapsacks. Still, there was not a sound.

The trees across the way seemed to be moaning louder. Could the wind have so increased in force? I noticed that Mileff was holding one hand to his ear. He drew a whistle from his pocket and blew gently on it. There came, from right beside me, the low whining note of the wind blowing through the tree-boughs. From beyond the trees it was answered. And I understood. Andrea and his men were signalling to us from the mountain-side.

Mileff merely raised one hand, and our line swung over the stone wall into the road. Bending double, the men ran across it to the wall that lined the

opposite side, surmounted it, and broke through an orchard at a run. In five minutes we were speeding along the main street of Osikovo. It was fairly sandy and so we made little noise. The guide kept ahead, but otherwise there was no attempt at formation. Behind Mileff and me, the rest huddled together like fox-hounds in full cry. We dodged around a corner and pulled up in a little square where three streets intersected.

At each corner was a house. They were all massive structures, built of stone, with slate roofs, and stood in courtyards, of which they formed one wall. One house was slightly larger than the other two, and it was immediately in front of us. There was something sinister about the blank surface of its lower walls, and the small barred windows of the two upper stories. The gateway was high, broad, and arched. The gate, itself, appeared to be substantially built of wooden beams, bolted together with iron. A huge iron lock fastened it to the side of the arch.

Our line huddled in the shadows cast by the two other houses, and the guide stepped across the roadway to the gate. Lifting his carbine, he pounded vigorously for a minute upon the beams. In the stillness of the village, the blows were as distinct as the reports of a Gatling. They

seemed to echo and re-echo from the archway. I fancied that in the house behind me, I could already hear people waking up and moving around. A second time the guide pounded the gate. Just why, I could not say, but I was certain that I could now hear, all around me, the sounds made by people roused from sleep. Osikovo was awakening.

From the other side of the gate came a shuffling of feet, and a voice demanded hoarsely what the caller wanted.

"We are friends," answered the guide, his rifle at his shoulder. "We are Pomaks from Libyaho. Let us enter. We have passed chetniks in the hills."

He spoke hurriedly, in the Turkish dialect. The Bashi-bazouk in the yard seemed to hesitate.

"I must see your face," he said, at last. "I must see you—you and your friends,—before you may enter, for it is seldom that friends come to their friends' houses after dark, and if you be friends, you will not mind the wait."

Breathlessly, we waited to see what would happen. There was a creaking noise and a wicket, a hand's-breadth in size, swung open mid-way up the gate. Through it was stuck a rifle-barrel. The guide had shrunk to the ground, out of the range



SERVING OUT RATIONS AT A HALT.

of fire. Of the Bashi-bazouk we could see nothing, because the wicket was small, and the yard beyond, dark.

"Stand forth," said the voice. "Stand forth, now, you and your friends, that I may see you."

As luck had it, Dodor moved beside me, uneasily, and a wandering star-gleam caught, for an instant, on the steel of his bayonet. The watchful eye of the Bashi-bazouk at the wicket saw, and his rifle settled rigidly into line, while Dodor collapsed noiselessly to one side.

"You are armed," spoke the Bashi-bazouk. "Who are you that come armed? Are you friends, as you say, or foes? Speak, quickly, for I do not wait long."

"It is useless," breathed Mileff. "They are too suspicious. We will charge, openly."

He placed the whistle at his lips, and the quivering penetrating sigh pierced the night. The Bashi-bazouk's rifle jerked upward, and he shouted hasty words in Turkish, which I did not understand. A door crashed shut in the house above him, and feet sounded on the stairs.

"Charge," cried Mileff, leaping to his feet. "Viva Makedonia!"

We bunched across the road at a run, firing our rifles at the gate. I had a glimpse of the guide

shooting through the wicket at the Bashi-bazouk warder, and the next thing I knew, I was in a mass of pushing, shoving men, jabbing the tough wood with bayonets, hammering on it, and even using their bare hands. Then Mileff's voice rose from the ruck.

"Stand back, stand back," he called. "Fire at the lock! Aim at the lock, every man!"

Ten or a dozen rifles were concentrated at the lock, and in a trice it was blown to atoms, the gate swinging slightly ajar. For a second we paused, hesitating. A young militiaman leaped forward, put his shoulder to the timbers, and sent the portal to one side. We cheered confusedly, and ran across the yard at the doorway that showed in the irregular stone wall. From a line of windows in the upper story came a spattering fire, accompanied by sheets of flame. The chetniks fired back, crouching behind whatever cover was available. I saw one man put a bullet into a bullock, and use the carcass as a shield.

Mileff and several others were in front of the house-door, shooting into the lock. It was a matter of less than a minute to smash it, but stout bars of wood held the framework in place. In the meantime, the fight was going rather against us. One of the militiamen crawled out of the

gateway, dragging a limp leg behind him, and we could not see that our fire was making any impression. Quick to see the need for some new action, Mileff seized a huge balk of timber lying by the door-step, and with Nicola and a couple of others, backed off a pace or two. Taking a short run, they brought it against the door with a mighty swing. The timbers groaned. Again they battered it, with short, fierce strokes, and because of their height from the ground, and consequent inability to see what was going on directly beneath them, the Bashi-bazouks could not effectively interrupt the manoeuvre.

With every blow, the door tottered more helplessly. We saw that it must come down. But where were Andrea and his men? We needed them badly at this time. The voivode blew his whistle, as the battering ram was swung the last time, and the door fell inward, opening up a cavernous hollow of blackness. Our own men were on hand, crouched against the house-wall, out of the Bashi-bazouk's line of fire. So we stayed, for what seemed several minutes, though it must really have been less.

A cheer, the pattering of sandalled feet on the road outside, and a renewal of firing by the askares overhead, heralded the approach of Andrea's

force. They descended upon the rear of the Bashi-bazouks' fortalice. This was our chance. Not a man waited for orders. They did not need them. They sprang at the steep stairs, hardly more than a ladder, that led up to the second floor, like a gang of wolves. It did not seem as if anything could stop them. A couple of the more cautious ones, crowded out in the intensity of the first stampede, waited behind, pumping bullets up through the trap-door, over the heads of the leaders. It was lucky they did stay back.

The first man through the trap was the chief of the militiamen. He bounded lightly up the stairs and disappeared from view. A revolver cracked, and as Mileff, behind him, reached the trap, his body fell backward, sweeping his comrades from the stairs as effectually as a broom. The head of a Bashi-bazouk showed for an instant, but Kortser took aim and the Turk came down on top of the pile of chetniks. It was a mess, indeed.

Outside, Andrea's men were occupying the attention of the Bashi-bazouks by a steady fire at the windows, and the couple of us who had stayed below, fired up the stairs as fast as we could work the ejectors. Our fire stopped the first rush, and the scanty numbers of the Bashi-bazouks did not allow them to take full advantage of the

situation, so that by the time Mileff had leaped from under the pile of chetniks at the stair-foot, a semblance of order had been restored.

I don't know how it happened, but something had been set afire in the pent-houses by the court-yard walls that served as stables, and they were blazing vividly, lighting up the entire village. Frightened sheep, cattle, goats, and horses ran about the yard, and the corpse of the Bashi-bazouk warder lay in a twisted heap by the gate, not far from a chetnik, whose body was simply drilled with bullet-holes. Certainly, it was a mad scene. And all about us was the village, blank and apparently tenantless, save for a prolonged wailing that rose from the scores of waiting women and children, who wept in fear of their fate.

Gazing at the confusion that filled the court-yard, and deafened by the constant popping of rifles up-stairs and out of doors, I did not at once hear Mileff's voice, when he spoke to me. His face was black with powder and his beard, partly singed off, was flecked with blood. He pressed his mouth close to my ear.

"This is no use," he shouted. "We must retire."

He beckoned to the men, and crouching close

to the ground, we ran across the court-yard, in the blinding glare. Bullets spat in the dust on every side, but none was hurt. The dancing of the flames, constantly tossing back and forth, filled the yard with conflicting lights and shadows that made good shooting impossible.

Beyond the gate we halted, and the men dropped down, exhausted. Dodging a crazy horse which ran, screaming, through the street, I hastened to the group that had swiftly formed about the voivode. Andrea and his men, in line, carrying their rifles at the ready, swung around the neighbouring corner, as I joined the council. They were comparatively fresh, for all they had done was to lie in the shelter of houses, and pot at the windows in the fortalice. Mileff called for a list of casualties. We had lost two men killed, including the handsome young chief of the militia detachment, and two wounded. So far as we knew, two of the enemy were dead.

"There must be no more of this," said Mileff, decisively. "I cannot afford to waste good men on a nest of rats. They must be smoked out."

He explained his plan. His detachment would form a covering force for Andrea's party, who would carry inflammable materials into the lower floor of the house. When a sufficient quantity

had been collected, they would be set alight. After that, it would only be necessary to shoot any Turks who tried to escape. Without any unnecessary talk, the sub-chiefs ran to their detachments, and told off men for the work. Andrea's party broke into near-by yards, and seized all the lumber, hay, and straw they could find. One man discovered a large can of oil, which was received with joy. Faggots were made, and a dozen of us deployed along the street in positions which commanded the house-windows.

Finally, when all the faggots were ready, our fire was stopped completely. Almost immediately, the Bashi-bazouks ceased shooting. It was as if they realised that a new development might be expected, and had stopped firing to listen—to strain their ears, that they might detect their enemy's next purpose.

There sounded the sighing murmur of the voivode's whistle, and Andrea's squad ran forward into the yard; the rest of us, outside, kept a steady stream of lead pouring into the windows. Andrea's men were cheering as they ran; they had their rifles slung over their shoulders, and they meant to be in at the death. The Bashi-bazouks managed to fire back at us, but they were given no time to aim, and Andrea reached the house in

safety. The faggots were hurled in through the doorway, and as each man threw down his load, he doubled back across the yard, out of the gate where Mileff and I were huddled, in the shelter of the posts. Andrea was the last to leave. He emptied the oil over the pile that bulged from the doorway, and stuck the lighted torch he carried into the mass. Then he, too, ran for the gate. A burst of cheering greeted him from the chetniks' line, and as if in a frenzy of despair, the Bashibazouks redoubled their fire, the spurts of flame squirting from the upper windows in never-ceasing streams.

Looking back, coldly, it seems a monstrous cruel thing to do—this roasting alive of half-a-dozen men. It is difficult to believe that it could have happened in this so-called enlightened twentieth century. For some reason, it seems to smack more of the bigoted cruelty of the days of the Inquisition, or when a mere matter of kings' names was sufficient to cause the beheading of honest men. But, after all, it could not have been helped. It was the quickest and cheapest way to get rid of a nest of vermin that had been terrorising the country-side,—thieves, murderers, and women-stealers, every one of them. It does not do to fight Turks in a half-hearted way. They do not under-

stand, and set squeamishness down as weakness.

The flames gained rapidly. They leaped to the stables that had escaped the first blaze and licked them up, mounting the outer walls of the house, and gaining foot-holds through the windows. It was not many minutes before the whole building was a single vast pillar of flames that towered to the sky, making the village, and the hills surrounding it, loom blackly against the unnatural glare. And from this house of flames came a shrill screaming, such as words cannot hope to describe and such as once heard, it is beyond the power of man to forget. The chetniks leaned sternly on their rifles, watching the conflagration take its course, and the villagers, by this time certain of the identity of the marauders, stole from their homes to look also on the destruction of their oppressors.

For months they had groaned beneath the exactions of the little band of arrogant, well-armed Bashi-bazouks and yet, now, when their deliverance had come, they could not exult. They could only watch, awesomely, at the dreadful doom that had been meted out by the "Men of the Night." In little knots they thronged the house-tops and the streets, watching the flames that swirled and roared, the women hugging

their children to their breasts, and the men staring with a fixed concentration at the scene.

As the front wall of the house fell in amid a shower of coals, Mileff's signal blew, and the chetniks hastened to him from their positions in the rough circle they had cast about the place, to prevent the possible escape of any of its inmates. Several had bandaged arms or heads. One was carried by a couple of comrades on a rude litter. The villagers watched them with even greater awe than they had the burning fortalice. But the magic of the night was upon them, and they said no word.

As silently as they came, the chetniks formed their line and departed through the dust of the road, the people who lined the way looking at them with curious drawn faces. A baby cried drearily, because it was tired, and a second wall fell in the house that had become the tomb of the Bashi-bazouks. On a crest the cheta halted for a minute, and I looked back at Osikovo, still showing red in the fire-glare, and dotted with the groups of wonder-struck peasants. In the east, a beam of rosy light shot over the dark wall of the pines, and Mileff muttered "Heidi!" to the weary men who stumbled after him.

CHAPTER IX

FORTOVISHTA

WHEN the sun finally rose over the eastern peaks of the Balkans, the cheta was straggling in a tenuous, broken line, along a bare ridge. At the head of the column, Mileff, Nicola, and I were clustered together. The rest followed, any way, the wounded man on the litter bringing up the rear. We were all ready to drop—wearied beyond description by the intense excitement and strain, as much as by the physical exertion. Sometimes, one's toe would catch in a tuft of grass, and try as one would, it was impossible to keep from collapsing to the ground. Mileff was the only man who smiled.

His cheerful grin never left his face, not even when, once, he, too, succumbed to a projecting root, and banged his jaw with the butt of his rifle. He always had a word of encouragement for the weaker ones, and every hour or so he earned forgotten blessings by declaring a halt. After his exhibition of nerve, one could have no

doubts as to his fitness to command. It is this kind of spirit that makes what we call *esprit de corps*.

We tramped on for hours, well into the morning. There was no trail. We travelled solely by the directions of the militiamen. At times, we would be plodding across fairly level meadows, bright with flowers; then we would strike into the hills, and the gloomy walls of a mountain pass would shut out the sunlight, while the level surface of the meadows changed to a bed of rocky boulders, occasionally under water.

All things come to an end, and toward noon we halted in a deep ravine, in the inmost heart of the Rhodopes. The pine trees shut us in completely, forming a dark curtain overhead and on all sides. We were able to light a little fire, and over this, those who were not too weary, roasted bits of bacon on pointed sticks or ramrods. The meat sizzled appetisingly and there was water at hand to wash down the rough sandwiches we made with coarse klepb. But few could eat. We were too sickeningly tired to be able to relish food. We simply sank down where we were and slept, not bothering, even, to remove knapsacks or unsling rifles from our shoulders.

By night-time, though, all had regained their

wind, and it was decided to split the cheta. The militiamen, carrying the wounded with them were to return to Kovatchavishta, while the chetniks pressed on to Fortovishta, another village of the raon. Nicola, too, was to return to Kovatchavishta to take up his duties as courier. Mileff had already made out despatches for him to carry across the line, and most of the chetniks entrusted him with some token for friends in Bulgaria.

Nicola was a wonderful success as a courier. He seldom had companions on his trips from Kovatchavishta to Logina and back again, yet he had never been caught. That, of course, was self-evident by his presence with us. A revolutionary courier caught by the askares would not live to tell the story. To be sure, Nicola had had brushes with the frontier-guards, but when he spoke of them he patted the breech of his Männlicher, suggestively, where he had a row of tiny nicks, hacked in the wood. I think there were nine of these nicks.

Shortly after sunset we started again. For a mile or so, the band kept together; then the militiamen filed off to the right, and the rest of us, ten in number, kept on into the darkness of a pine forest, that clothed the foot-hills of a range of gaunt mountains. For an hour, perhaps, we

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tramped through the forest, by hidden trails, crisscrossing each other more like the runways of wild beasts, than the thoroughfares of civilised men. At the end, we came out upon an expanse of moorlands and rolling foot-hills.

Here, we were right in the midst of a patch of Turkish country. Even the peasantry were Mohammedans, by belief, if not by stock. Frequently we passed villages, that showed us darker clumps in the darkness, speckled with lights. The utmost care had to be used to make no noise. Every now and then dogs barked at us, but that was to be expected. We made, I remember, a wide detour around a certain village, because, Mileff whispered, it was noted for the number and savageness of its canines. Incidentally, we passed it to windward.

At a point midway between two Turkish villages, we were compelled to halt. It was at this place according to the secret arrangements of the revolutionary committee of the raon, that we were to be met by a guide from Fortovishta who would lead us into the village, somewhat difficult of access, by little-known paths, so that we should not attract the attention of the Pomaks, who formed probably one-quarter of its population.

It was extremely dangerous to halt where we

were, even for a few minutes, but there was nothing else to do. Mileff called softly the number of the guide we expected, "Osen, osen" ("eight, eight"). There was no response. In the village behind us, a dog barked shrilly, and a second joined in. It seemed as though some fiendish instinct had possessed the curs, for in two minutes the whole village-full were baying at us. They made the night ring with their howling.

The position was mighty uncomfortable. Mileff was not familiar with the country around, and he dared not proceed in the blackness, that became thicker with every passing moment. The chances of blundering into a Turkish patrol were too enticing. Yet we did not know at what moment we might be attacked. In the village ahead of us, there was a small garrison of askares, and if they were awakened by the uproar of the dogs' barking, they might sally out to see what was happening.

Altogether, it was unpleasant. At first, we simply sat in the shade of a clump of bushes, as we pleased. When five minutes had passed and our guide had not appeared, word was passed down the line to have rifles ready, and we stole forward to the right, taking up an elevated position on a knoll. Here we waited in a half-circle. The orders were not to unsling knapsacks, but to

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be ready for fight or flight, on the instant. There is no use denying we were all of us slightly over-strained.

It was at this moment that Andrea spied a moving shadow on a ridge, to the right, farther on. It was a very peculiar shadow, and it did not take the keen-eyed chetniks long to make it out as a cloak-wrapped figure, stealing cautiously through the tall grass, bent nearly double. Behind it came two other figures. Mileff stared at them, intently; we could distinguish, as they came nearer, that they wore the sheepskin cap of the peasant and long cloaks.

Mileff whistled gently, and the figures stopped. He whistled again, and one, stepping forward, stood erect, with cloak flung back. Beneath the cloak a rifle gleamed. This man whistled—a long-drawn, sibilant note, not unlike Mileff's call. All the chetniks recognised it and sprang to their feet. The stranger and his companions instantly dropped to the grass, but Mileff spoke aloud, unhesitatingly.

"We are friends," he said clearly. "Viva Makedonia! Let us hurry from this place of dogs and Turks, men of Fortovishta."

The strangers leaped to their feet and came forward. They were, indeed, the men from



MILITIAMEN OF FORTOVISHTA.

Fortovishta, and they hurriedly explained that they had not expected us so early. They had not heard of the fight in Osikovo, and so they had no reason to suppose that we would arrive at this meeting place, any earlier than if we had started from Kovatchavishta. All this took but a couple of seconds to explain, and then the cheta was trotting through the foot-hills again, behind the new guides.

Instead of growing better, as we approached the village, the roads became worse. I afterward learned that even the usual approaches to Fortovishta are miserably wet; the back-door alley we followed was almost entirely under water, and a musk-rat would have had the best of a man at any point. From the foot-hills, we climbed down into a valley, through which ran a broad mountain stream, bridged by far-spaced stepping-stones, across which we picked our way, getting what support we could from our staffs. This river was a most peculiar stream that twisted back and forth on itself, convulsively. If we forded it once, we forded it four times.

After I emerged the fourth time from the river, into which I had slipped from an extra well-polished stone, I found a sloping cliff facing us. "Heidi," quoth Mileff, and up we marched.

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Holding on to roots, bushes, even crooking boulders with the ends of our staffs, we pushed relentlessly up the cliff. At the top, we paused for a breathing-spell, and then continued along its edge.

I had thought the climb up sufficiently tiresome but the next stage of the march was infinitely worse—not to speak of being trying on one's nerves. In some by-gone generation, it had been deemed best to build an irrigation ditch along the summit of the cliff, I suppose, for the purpose of watering the grape-vines, with which Fortovishta is richly endowed. This irrigation ditch is separated from the slope of the cliff, which grows steeper as one approaches the village, by a ledge of ground perhaps six inches wide. The village's back-door path runs along this ledge for several hundred yards. On one side is the ditch, quite broad, and deep enough to drench one from head to foot, on the other the tops of the trees that grow on the abrupt slope of the cliff. Underneath the trees, one catches glimpses of the river, becoming deeper with every rapid.

When we came to the outskirts of the village, we found that the roads were under water and it was necessary to walk the tops of the stone fences. In a field that by some miracle had escaped the deluge which seemed to have visited the local-

ity, we halted, while one of our guides stole forward into the streets to reconnoitre. As I have had occasion to remark, there are many Pomaks in Fortovishta, living for the most part in a quarter by themselves, and we had to make sure that none of them was in the streets.

Some minutes past midnight, we were escorted stealthily through a network of blind alleys to a rather small house standing, as usual, in its court-yard. Our host, a trembling old peasant, with a shaggy beard, stood shivering beside the door. To each of us he vouchsafed a "Nos drave," between chattering teeth, to the accompaniment of his wagging head, as he ushered us into a small apartment upstairs, apparently used as a store-room. Piles of beans in the pod half-filled it, and on these we made our beds. Perhaps the description does not sound comfortable; yet we slept eight solid hours, and when we waked the sunlight was flooding the room through a window that gave on a grain-clad hillside, over which crawled slow teams of oxen, to the solemn cadences of their drivers' songs.

Swinging the lattice, so that none in the street could see me, I stared out at the daily life of Fortovishta, already in full swing. Women walked down the alleys, water-jugs poised jauntily on

their heads, moving their bodies lithely, with a free, lissome stride. Young girls hurried past on errands, or taking baby brothers and sisters to the fields for an airing. A team of ponderous oxen ploughed sullenly through the mud, and their master swung his legs lazily from the string-piece of his wooden-wheeled cart.

The street that I saw was not a very attractive-looking place. It was rimmed by craggy buildings, two and three stories in height, set close together, and toppling toward one another in true medieval style, making the roofs within easy jumping distance. I wondered idly if this was why most windows, even those under the eaves, were barred. Of what we would call paving, the alley below me was totally innocent. Irregular cobbles showed in the midst of the sea of mud and filth, and the grading was as whimsical as the course. Nobody seemed to mind it, though. Girls and women swung lightly along in their bare feet, and the men moved with that indescribable air of lordly possession which is a part of the Eastern male.

There is something strangely picturesque about the Balkan men of Macedonia, especially the Pomaks. Only the priests and schoolmasters wear shoes, for one thing. With the rest of the

population the hide sandal, often home-made, is the popular foot-gear. Then, too, there is such a cheerful variety of costume. It is seldom that one finds two villages possessing the same dress. To be sure, one differentiates villages of the same locality only by small details, but there is generally no resemblance, whatsoever, between the dress of a plainsman and that of a mountaineer.

In a village like Fortovishta, the place of gossip is the fountain. Here, all the old wives gather to exchange the news of events. Here, the births and deaths are announced, and here the messages or proclamations from the Pasha are read. On occasion, it is from the village fountain that the tide of massacre begins its progress. It is the gathering place of the female portion of the population, and when a man arrives home to find his wife absent he seeks her there. In this respect, it will be seen, Macedonia resembles the East of biblical times. In fact, many a maiden has seen the youth of her choice, for the first time, while carrying the family water-jug to the source of universal supply.

It was at the fountain that I directed my gaze, as I crouched behind the lattice in the room where the chetniks slept, noting that the throng around it was so dense that women just coming up had

to stand in line and wait their turns, to fill the tall jugs they carried. As I looked, an immense figure loomed up in the opening of a narrow street by the fountain. It was the village priest.

The women made a way for him, splitting to right and left, as he passed, with deep bows. He nodded his head, covered with the high, brimless stove-pipe hat of the Bulgarian priesthood, and sauntered gravely up to the door of our house, his long black gown flapping about the purple socks which were revealed every time it lifted. Evidently he was going to pay us a visit. I turned and roused Mileff.

A minute later, our host entered the room to announce the Papa, and the chetniks rose, respectfully, hastily endeavouring to rub the bean-pods out of their hair. The priest bowed to us and shook hands all round. He did n't seem to put on any side, and as nearly as I could make out, was a very jolly fellow, indeed. Mileff told him about our fight at Osikovo, and he expressed great interest, asked for all the details, and before he left knew as much about the affair as any of the cheta. Like all the priests I met, he exhibited considerable interest in me, as well. He wanted to know why I came to Macedonia, where else I had been, what my profession was, and what

I thought of the country. But he did not, like one priest I met, attempt to catechise me on my religious beliefs, through an interpreter.

His reverence sat, cross-legged, like a good subject of the Sultan, having first removed his spiked brogans, and smoked cigarettes with the chetniks. When he was told that I did not smoke he appeared distressed, and advised me to adopt the habit. He declared smoking was good for one's health in Macedonia. Breakfast, consisting of tea and klepb, was served while he was present, and he addressed himself to it with the rest of us, talking all the while. I thought he said grace in a rather perfunctory manner but I found afterward that they say so many graces, in the course of a day, in Macedonia, that it is absolutely necessary to say them quickly, if anything else is to be done. In many villages, it is customary to trace a cross in the air over a loaf of bread that is to be cut. Nearly all loaves have wooden crosses sunk into the dough. They are disagreeable to come upon, when one is in the act of masticating.

From the priest we learned an interesting piece of news. He told us that seven other chetniks, four of them belonging to Mileff's cheta, and three from the raon of Drama, to the south, had come

into the village the night before, several hours previous to our arrival, and were in hiding in another house. His visit was for the purpose of arranging a juncture with them that night.

We were really sorry when the priest left. The rest of the day was extremely monotonous, and the hours seemed to fairly crawl along, for the chetniks were anxious to see their comrades of whom the Papa had spoken. At eight o'clock, after supper, we were mustered in the ground-floor stable of the house, among the cows and goats which gave us grudging foot-room. Our host went out first, and met the militia scouts who were stationed along the route to the other house. There was some danger in moving through Fortovishta, at such an early hour—danger of discovery, that is. No askares were in the immediate vicinity.

Ten minutes, fifteen minutes slipped by, and no beckoning finger showed at the crack in the door, through which the grey-beard had disappeared. A half-hour had almost passed when he returned. Mileff uttered one admonition. It was "Heidi." Heidi is the most common word with the chetniks. If it has any rival, that is "outmashtanyea" ("revenge").

We hurried. We did more than that; we ran, sprinting along the crooked, hilly streets, keeping

our footing, Heaven knows how, rifles bumping against our backs most uncomfortably, and every moment listening to hear some unleashed cur bay forth his resentment of our presence. A stream that was directly in the centre of the alley, we leaped blindly, and stumbled around a corner into a broad gateway that yawned open, until the last man was in, and swung shut on his heels without a creak or jar.

This house was much larger than the one we had spent the preceding night in, and the room set aside for the chetniks was a spacious apartment, with a verandah screened so that it could not be observed from the street. Indeed, the house was on the outskirts of the village, with few others near to it.

Our advent into that room partook of the nature of a stage spectacle. The seven men who leaped to their feet to greet the chief, and the rest of us, were beyond the ordinary in stature, with one exception, and the exception contrived to take up more space than the largest of his friends. The chetniks with whom I had been travelling were a sufficiently odd-looking lot of men, but they were easily surpassed by our new acquaintances. In their fanciful uniforms, extravagantly braided or trimmed,

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with long, flowing hair and moustaches, bullets slipped into open pouches on their breasts where they could be seized easiest in a close action, they might have stepped from the chorus of an Offenbach opera. Some carried curved cimeters they had captured from askares, and each had at least one extra revolver in his sash.

A peculiar fact that I noted at this time, and which was confirmed by later observations, was that no matter how many campaigns a chetnik may have served, he does not reach the extremes of picturesqueness until he has been some time across the frontier. Macedonia's peculiar atmosphere of tense, deadly hatred, combined with the chivalrous spirit which dictates that a man's hands must be clean, so that he may die clean, and that one's life must be sacrificed, as a matter of course for a friend, cannot be duplicated in Bulgaria—or anywhere else.

They were an enthusiastic lot, those chetniks. The two parties had not seen each other for months. Mileff and his men were full of news from Sofia; they knew what the great world was doing—the world beyond the Danube, in which the clever Bulgars become more interested every year. And in the packs of our chetniks were newspapers not more than a couple of

weeks old. As for the others, they could tell tales of brisk little mountain skirmishes, and night-attacks in the plains. They had bullet-holes and trophies to show, and they had lived the life so long and so constantly that they did not have to think to fight, and they could feel their way over the trackless hills on the darkest night.

Seven there were, as I have said—Georg Zankoff and Stephen and Georg Mageloff, from the raon of Drama, where Nicola Panitza is voivode—that Panitza who, three months afterward, shot down Garvanoff and Sarafoff, as he said goodnight to them on Sarafoff's doorstep in Sofia—and Peter Yankoff, Ilia Gavalileff, Kustadin Mavarok, and Giorgi Vanoff. I remember their names well, for with the last four I afterward became great friends.

In all Macedonia, I do not believe there were seven more typically picturesque chetniks. Picturesque is the sole word one can use. It is the only word that describes them. If one did not know them, one might be inclined to set down their costumes and manner as products of a childish love for the theatrical. But that was not it. They were theatrical in a harmless sort of way, perhaps, just as little children are vain. It was

the kind of vanity, though, that never did any one, not even themselves, any harm.

Peter Yankoff was the handsomest man I have ever met. It is but fair to say, at the same time, that he was the single chetnik I met in Macedonia who had the slightest trace of selfishness in his character. The selfishness that Peter—Handsome Peter, *Le bel Pierre*, we called him—showed, was due more to vanity than anything else. I have seen the same selfishness in a spoiled child. Peter simply had a vivid comprehension of his good looks. Yet a characteristic of his that always puzzled me, under the circumstances, was his absolute indifference to women.

In appearance he was the living image of Van Dyke's conception of Charles I. He had the oval dark face, proud and haughty; the soft, brown hair, silky as a baby's, which he wore in long ringlets, carefully curled; and his tiny beard and moustache were trimmed in the Van Dyke style. His eyes, dark and soulful, matched his hair, and his small hands and feet belied the peasant stock from which he sprang.

Handsome Peter ranked as a sub-chief in the cheta, and I will say for him that he was as brave as he was handsome. He literally did not know what fear was. I am sorry I cannot use a less

hackneyed expression to describe this attribute. It was equally conspicuous in the other members of the cheta.

Kustadin and Ilia were two of a kind, great, broad-shouldered men, trained down to the last ounce of superfluous flesh, and hard as nails. The short-barrelled Männlicher rifles were as tooth-picks in their big hands. They could always be relied upon in a pinch, and for the rest, they said as few words as possible. Talking was not their strong point, as a general rule.

Giorgi deserves a paragraph to himself. He was a little, roly-poly fellow, fat and jolly and loud of tongue, a handy man at almost anything. He could cook to perfection and despite his build he could march as rapidly as the largest of the chetniks. And when it came to a fight, Giorgi was a miniature tiger. He positively enjoyed the smell of powder. It seemed to make him drunk. Everybody liked him, for he was an agreeable bit of a man, never unwilling to go out of his way to do a favour.

As we entered the room, these seven chetniks surged forward and literally threw themselves upon us. They kissed each one of us, separately, and we saluted each one in return. That is to say, I kissed each one but the first, whom I

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unwittingly passed with a handshake. He realised, doubtless, that forgiveness should be shown, in consideration of my American upbringing, and merely chuckled at what was a serious breach of etiquette—brothers-in-arms being supposed, according to the chetnik code, to be even closer than blood brethren.

For hours that night we sat and talked, so that it was nearly morning when we rolled up in our cloaks and went to sleep.

CHAPTER X

CHETNIKS AT PLAY—A LOAF AT GHERMAN

ALL the next morning, we, of the cheta, discussed plans and exchanged such bits of news as had been missed during the talk the night before. A group of the chetniks gathered around me, and by dint of signs and the few words of Bulgarian I knew, probed me with questions about the greatness of America.

They desired to know how many people there were in America, and when they heard, they threw up their hands in amazement. Then, they must know the size of the United States, and roughly, the geographical shape of the country. But their greatest surprise was expressed when I told them that New York City contained as many people as all Bulgaria. To these simple fellows, Bulgaria was a great land, wonderfully powerful, and to a certain extent, rich. To be sure, they had heard vaguely that there were other and richer lands, beyond the Danube, but these were only tales—they had not seen with their own eyes.

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Finally, they wished to know how large an army America possessed. It must be quite large, they suggested. I told them that it barely surpassed the Bulgarian army in point of numbers. They gasped. How could such a powerful nation get along with so small a force of defenders? We must be a born military people? Like the Black Mountain men, natural bushwhackers? We had a fine militia perhaps? I had to admit that our militia was small in size and questionable in efficiency.

At that, they gave up the quest and sat back, wondering. Surely, we Americans were a strange people! We were rich; that they knew, because they had heard of countrymen, who had gone to St. Louis and made as much as a Napoleon a day. Yet we had nothing to protect our riches with. Protesting, they turned to the voivode, who had read of these things. He smiled, and told them that all I had said was true. And again they abandoned the quest, shaking their heads, until one suddenly demanded of me whether we had conscription in America. The average European takes conscription as a matter of course. Only when he comes to think it over, does he realise what an imposition it is. The consequence is an intense desire to escape the burden.

My chetnik friends, having learned that in America there is much money, a small army, and no conscription, unanimously decided that as soon as they had served their time, and saved sufficient money, they would emigrate. America was the place for them, they announced.

It seemed incumbent upon me, under the circumstances, to attempt to explain that America had pronounced disadvantages, but the intricacies of protection, the Trusts, and high prices were beyond my slender stock of Bulgarian, and after an hour's effort I gave up in despair.

Simultaneously, with the conclusion of the impromptu lecture, entered a brace of old women, the typical bent, gnarled crones into whom the Macedonian women degenerate, through years of toil and physical suffering. They carried bags of nuts and sweet apples, as presents to the chetniks and made a great fuss over us. One of them took an exceeding fancy to me, signifying that I looked like her son, a graduate of the gymnasium at Salonica, who was teaching in another village. Throughout the rest of the day, she paid me much attention, and made several solicitous visits to our quarters, to see that I had everything I wanted. Her motherliness was really touching, and when she felt of my clothing with her trembling old

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hands, and asked if I was dressed warm enough, I could not avoid feeling touched.

She was not much to look at, that wrinkled old peasant woman, but she had a sweet, wholesome face, and through the faded eyes one caught sporadic glimpses of the soul within—as pure and spotless and beautifully maternal as any I have ever seen. I have always carried her in my memory, a figure of love that stands forth very prominently against the background of those wild days. I do not know her name. Like many others whom I met and knew, for a day or two, she filled her place in the kaleidoscopic vision and passed on, out of my ken, into a ruck of spectres. I can only hope that she is still alive, and that the sea of carnage and anarchism, which eddies back and forth across the brown Macedonian hills, has left her in peace, looking forward to the stray visits from the son whose photograph she carries in her bosom.

We had a grand dinner that day. The success at Osikovo, and the reunion of the comrades, went to the heads of the chetniks like wine, and they insisted that the event be fittingly celebrated. Everybody was requisitioned upon. I was instructed to concoct a *compote Americaine*, which was nothing more nor less than apple sauce



BAKING BREAD FOR THE CHETA'S SUNDAY DINNER.

Chickens were secured and fried, a delicious pilaf was prepared and cooked by fat Giorgi, as only the Bulgars can cook rice, slightly sweetened with sugar, and lastly, there was a great pudding of flour and divers mysterious ingredients, baked by our hostess in a pan that must have been four feet in circumference. Of course, no ordinary stove could contain such a monster. The family bake-oven, a regular small hut in the court-yard, was employed for the purpose.

When the time came to serve the meal, we sat in concentric circles about a low table in the middle of the room, while our host carved and apportioned the several courses onto our trenchers of klepb. Wine was brought in later, in a huge bucket and dished out into our tin cups. Unthinkingly, I was about to drink, when I noticed that all the chetniks who had been served were waiting, motionless. Lowering my cup, I waited, also, curious to see what would happen. The last chetnik received his portion and squatted into position, cross-legged, and Mileff, sitting at the head of the room, rose slowly to his feet, a cup held high in one hand.

There was dead silence in the room. None stirred. All eyes were bent on the voivode. It was a strange scene. The windows were heavily

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draped, so that even the sun was excluded, and what light there was filtered through the doorway and window on the gallery. Across the gallery railing, I had a glimpse of the green hillside, bathed in sunshine.

“Viva Makedonia!” said Mileff, his voice ringing with that peculiar resonance which comes with deep feeling.

Like a solemn wave of sound, the voices of the kneeling chetniks answered him:

“Viva Makedonia!”

That was all. Nothing more was said. In a minute, the room was bubbling with laughter; men were pummelling each other, jovially. The sunbeams darted here and there, and only when they revealed a last vanishing wrinkle on some man's forehead, momentarily puckered by a fierce passion of hatred, could one believe that the little scene had really taken place. I felt almost like an intruder; I felt that I had seen into the souls of men. You read of the intense loyalty that the men of old had for their kings, and still, to-day, at the regimental mess-tables in several lands, the first glass is drunk, standing, to “The King!” But this was different. After all, what is a king, beside the land of one's birth?

As I have said, the solemnness did not last long.

Soon, we were having just as hilarious a time as ever. It seems to be an attribute of men who live in the midst of danger and death—this swift transition from mood to mood. Other toasts were proposed and drunk. They proposed one to the “Americansky chetnik” and drank it, standing, with much laughter. I got up in my turn and drank to the chetniks, and I made a spread-eagle after-dinner speech in English, of which, naturally, they did not understand a word, but at which they laughed, most encouragingly, and cheered as loudly as they dared.

The wine having all been drunk, they cleared a space in the centre of the room, and half a dozen of the most expert formed a circle and danced the horo, the Bulgarian national dance, with all its frills and graces, handkerchiefs tossed over one shoulder and hands held high above their heads. Ilia, the biggest of the lot, was especially good at it, and it was indeed worth going far to see, to watch him capering through the more intricate steps. As fast as one squad became winded, others leaped forward to take their places, and the dancing kept up throughout most of the afternoon. Not to be outdone by the others, I gave an imitation of a negro breakdown and an Indian war-dance. The chetniks enjoyed them hugely, especially

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the war-dance, which they encored again and again. Through all the turmoil, Ilia Ivan, the small son of our host, sat beside Mileff, with his kitten, proud to be in such company, and to listen to the chetniks' accounts of their adventures.

One tires of all things in time, and dancing was eventually voted a bore. So they fell to wrestling among themselves, and tossed each other about, so that the floor creaked. At last, they discovered Handsome Peter prinking in a corner, and they welcomed the chance for fun with whoops. Some of them leaped on him and tore his comb away; others came to his assistance and beat them back, and there was a free fight over the floor, that lasted until Mileff laughingly intervened, wading into the mass and tossing the combatants to right and left.

Boys they were, just ordinary overgrown boys —when there was no man's work to be done. They had the care-free, happy instincts of boys, and the same reckless delight in a shindy. It was hard at such times to believe that these were some of the dare-devil fighters, who managed to keep 120,000 of the best troops in the Sultan's army occupied in the "pacification" of Macedonia.

That night we marched at ten o'clock for Gherman. Like gliding shadows, the chetniks

stole through the silent streets of the village and out into the rice- and corn-fields that hemmed its borders. The night's march was not a long one—but a trifle more than three hours, in length—yet it lay through a populous country and caution dictated a rapid gait.

For the first hour, we ploughed our way across the swampy rice-fields, intersected by dykes and drainage ditches. Often, we were waist-deep in water and sticky mud. Tall swamp-grass grew in the barren places, and the stalks of the corn that waved in the dryer fields tripped us up with annoying frequency. So we pushed on, faster and faster, until we panted under the burden of arms and ammunition, and the sweat that poured from our faces and bodies soaked that portion of us which the stagnant ditch water had been unable to reach.

In the end, we came out into more open country, in the lower foot-hills, a country of fairly good roads, running level and straight. But even then we found trouble in store for us. Before we had marched many minutes, from a considerable distance in advance came a rumble of drums and a faint clamouring, that sounded eerie and awesome in the vast stillness of the mountains. It was one of the Turkish patrols that are con-

stantly circulating through the settled portions of the country. Usually, the askares are safe asleep by ten o'clock, and the voivode had not bargained on their presence to interrupt our journey.

As we were not looking for a fight, and were ignorant of the strength of the patrol, the alternative—a case of Hobson's choice—was to leave the road, and take a roundabout course through the fields. With the guide ahead, at a slinging dog-trot, we scaled a low stone wall and made off across the furrows of a cultivated field. Probably, the average American has never tried running across ploughed fields, in the dark, carrying a knapsack, cloak, and field equipment, as an exercise. I can recommend it heartily to any stout person, desirous of losing weight. He will find that it works admirably, I am sure, but unless he has some one standing over him and compelling him to do it, he is apt to grow strangely weary, after a quarter of a mile or so.

For us there was no rest. We trotted on and on, our tongues hanging from our mouths, panting like tired dogs. Far off, to the rear, the muffled rumbling of drums acted as a constant incentive to action. Overhead, the crescent moon had faded from the sky, and there was only the light of the stars, frosty and hard, in the dim cerulean

blueness, to blot the vacancy of the vault. The star-sheen of the mountain-skies is a wonderful thing, and in Macedonia one finds all the opulence of colour of the Eastern heavens, combined with a certain cold distinctness of outline.

When the sound of the drums had been shut out by an interposing mountain-spur, we halted for a rest, and to await the arrival of the militia detachment from Gherman, who would guide us into the village. None appeared, so we marched on for a few minutes and halted again, while Mileff hailed the night, calling softly the number of the expected men. Still they did not appear, and we marched on slowly, looking for them. We were once more on a decent road that traversed the valley in an undulating line. Before us, in the starlight, a speck began to take shape, moving in our direction. It kept on, fearlessly, and in the course of a few hundred feet, we were able to make it out as three men, one walking in advance of the other two.

And when I was able to see the first man distinctly, I had all I could do to refrain from laughing. He was an exceedingly funny figure in the stage-setting of bleak, deserted mountains and armed men, wearing a costume that smacked of bygone days. The new-comer was dressed in a suit of

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European clothes, of the sort known as "hand-me-downs," somewhat the worse for wear, and lacking a coat. On his back was what is called, in the rural districts of America, a "boiled" shirt, and a vest; the absence of a collar, a good-natured smile, and a broad Irish face, made him look like many a corner saloon-keeper in New York. He swung a small hatchet in one hand, as he walked.

In the starlight we halted, and introductions were exchanged. The man of the boiled shirt was the schoolmaster of Gherman, I learned, as well as head of the local Revolutionary Committee. He chuckled, and greeted me with "good night," in passable English, but in answer to my eager inquiries, he demonstrated that the rest of his vocabulary was limited to "good morning." He was always willing to say these two phrases, however, and did not seem in any danger of forgetting them.

Half an hour's march took us into Gherman, quite a large village, at which Miss Stone was detained, while she was held by the insurgents several years ago—or, at least, so I was informed by various Macedonians. We were destined for the house of the schoolmaster, which was situated in the centre of the village, but at some

distance from the quarter where the small Pomak population live, by themselves.

The schoolmaster's house was not a very large one, but it was clean, to a superlative degree, compared with most Macedonian houses, and his family seemed to be of a higher mental calibre. His wife was an educated woman, and the children, too, tiny, flaxen-haired tots, had a brighter aspect than average Macedonian youngsters. To be sure, they profited by the distinction of being pronounced blondes, a rarity among their race. Here and there, about the house, were little touches, wellnigh indefinable, that made one feel nearly civilised. The sight of an old engraving of Mary Stuart, on the wall of the room occupied by Mileff and myself, was particularly homelike.

The next day, we were again subjected to an inundation of visitors, mostly old women, and including the village priest. They were all interested in the foreign chetnik, and seemed to expect me to be able to understand the Bulgarian they discharged at me, with machine-gun rapidity.

In the afternoon, a delegation of leading citizens filed solemnly into the room, decorously removing their brogans at the door, and squatting on their heels, held conclave with Mileff until supper-time. Meanwhile, I had been requested

to make another *compote Américaine*, and the schoolmaster, having been told of my achievement of the day before, enthusiastically offered all facilities for a similar culinary feat.

Now, previous to entering Macedonia, I had never tried my hand at cooking anything except coffee, but my previous successes emboldened me to attempt something more ambitious. Accordingly, I put in an application for flour, eggs, fruit, and sugar, and prepared a batter for an apple-cake. Andrea and Kortser helped me, and when the mixture was ready for frying over the open fire in the living-room-kitchen-parlor-store-room-main-bedroom, pretty nearly the whole family and the cheta endeavoured to assist, as well. We began by trying to put the frying-pan on top of a large pot of stew. Inside of a minute, when the grease began to hiss, both capsized, and only the heroic energy of Andrea saved the evening meal. But after that, things went famously, and the apple-cake was voted a tremendous success.

Shortly after night-fall, we moved on to another house, where we were joined by three chetniks carrying despatches across the frontier to Sofia, from the southern raon of Drama. During the next day more village counsellors came in, and it was decided that Mileff, with an escort of two



VILLAGERS OF GHERMAN AT A FESTIVAL.

men, should march to a village across the valley, where he could hold a conference with the members of the raon committee, in greater safety. But when it was discovered that there would be no moon, and that clouds obscuring the stars would make the night so much darker, he decided to wait, as the route lay across country, where it would be easy to go astray.

As things turned out, it was as well he waited, for the three members of the raon committee, being familiar with the intervening country, and knowing that he was not, started for Gherman to meet him there. They got in shortly before daylight, after a six hours' push. The same night, Dodor, who had been sent off to Drama raon, with despatches, returned. He had been unable to go far, because of the extreme activity the askares were showing.

Mileff's conferences with his raon and village committees kept him busily occupied, but it was otherwise with the chetniks. They had no means of passing the time, except such as they could devise by their own ingenuity. The result was that they got into mischief. Generally, it was a harmless sort of mischief that merely consisted in acting like a lot of young animals, and making too much noise. But once a tragedy

was narrowly averted. Peter Yankoff, Handsome Peter, had a vein of deviltry in him, smacking of the malicious, that the other chetniks lacked. It is a vein that is likely to make trouble among idle men. Perhaps Peter knew this, perhaps he did n't. At any rate he used his powers to annoy fat Giorgi. Two of the strange chetniks from Drama speedily fell under the spell of Handsome Peter's persuasive personality, and proud to be on friendly terms with so famous a character, joined with him in teasing the little man.

I don't know what they said, but they surely gruelled Giorgi mercilessly. That much one could see from his facial expression, which was at times comic, in its restrained wrath. Handsome Peter was an adept at this sort of work, and lay lazily on his back, outwardly regarding Giorgi as too unimportant an antagonist to merit close attention.

Words flew faster and faster, and Giorgi's broad figure quivered more and more with indignation. I noticed the other chetniks begin to prick up their ears and take more notice of the squabble. Andrea, who was in authority in the chief's absence, spoke to Peter sharply, but Peter only rolled over on his back and sneered in a peculiarly insulting way at Giorgi, as he said

something with cutting emphasis. It must have been an extremely offensive form of Bulgarian insult, for in a second Giorgi was on his knees with his revolver in his hand. At the same moment Dodor leaped on him from the side and jerked his arm up, so that the bullet whizzed over the heads of Peter and me, lying between the two.

Andrea went to Dodor's assistance, and between them they pinioned Giorgi, and took his gun away from him. It was a brisk affair while it lasted. Peter, though he looked interested when he saw Giorgi's pistol-barrel wavering in his direction, immediately lay back on the floor and chewed a straw sullenly.

Andrea talked to Giorgi as though he were a little child, and like a little child, Giorgi burst into tears, promising that he would be good. As it really was n't his fault, Andrea was easy on him, and then turned his attention to Peter. Peter proved untractable and Andrea ordered them both, together with the two strange chetniks, to accompany him to the room where Mileff was holding his conference. Mileff gave them a head-master lecture, and ordered Peter to publicly apologise to Giorgi and shake hands. They performed the amenities, as meekly as lambs, and after a few days of sulking were as good friends as ever.

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It was announced at supper that evening, that the committee had decided not to make a big attack on the askares, for the present, but to confine their attention to guerilla tactics, stampeding small detachments and cutting off out-posts. Handsome Peter, accompanied by a detachment, was to escort the Drama chetniks part of the way on their journey to the frontier, and Dodor, the schoolboy, was to make a second attempt to reach Drama, this time with an escort. I never saw Dodor again, and I have often wondered whether he performed his mission successfully and ever returned to Bulgaria, to the old mother, who drove off in the victoria from the inn at Logina.

All of the chetniks in the two parties had orders to rejoin the voivode as soon as possible.

CHAPTER XI

ORGANISING THE MOUNTAIN VILLAGES

THE Mileff cheta was a much-depleted body of men when it left Gherman that night, for more than half our number were detached as escorts to the despatch-bearers. Our goal was once again the village of Fortovishta, standing in the midst of its moat-like rice-fields. The route we followed was different from that we had taken on our journey to Gherman, but the march was not a pleasant one. Part of the way was over and under water, and the rest of it was through the soft, slipping earth of ploughed fields, or acres of plumed corn-stalks, always awaiting an opportunity to slap the face of the passing chetnik, or trip him up.

To a point, half-way between Gherman and Fortovishta, we had an escort of militiamen, from the former village, and at this point, under a muddy dyke, shaded by a clump of drooping trees, waited the patrol from Fortovishta. They hailed us, sibilantly, as we passed, and after saying

good-bye to the plucky fellows, who had helped us so far along the way, we fell into single file behind our new friends.

Drearily monotonous expanses of ploughed fields, furrow following upon furrow, were succeeded by nasty little irrigation-ditches, looking absurdly narrow in the glimmering starlight. Having measured them, one clutched one's rifle tightly, and leaped boldly. Then one alighted, heels first, in the side of the slimy bank, tripped, and went headlong into the mire. Curses were of no use, and were prohibited anyway, on account of the noise. The sole remedy was to hurry faster, and let fatigue wipe out the memory of the accident.

The backdoor of Fortovishta, through which we entered, lies beyond a wide stretch of corn-fields. While we were yet some distance away, in the corn, we could make out the few lights of the village, and knew that our march was almost finished. But nearness did not mean comfort, and it seemed as though the corn-stalks grew higher and more wiry, as we proceeded. Each man marched with an arm stretched out before him, to ward his face—it helped a lot, if one took a tumble and one's rifle bumped the back of one's head.

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At the edge of the corn-field, we came to a broader ditch than usual, so broad that stepping-stones, at rather irregular distances, had been provided. The stepping-stones led to a small gate in the stone wall of a court-yard. Through this we stepped nimbly, and were hurriedly ushered across the open space to an outlying barn. Huddled in the lower story of the barn, amongst the cattle, Mileff and the guides held a whispered conversation with two other men, who had been waiting for us.

It seemed that the house we had entered was not our real destination. It was only a sort of half-way station, where we could wait until the militia had gone forward, and made sure that we could traverse the village in safety. They hastened off on their errand, and we were told to climb the stairs to the second floor, the granary of the farm.

The old farmer, who had preceded us up the stairs with a shaded lantern, deposited it on the board-floor, first making sure that it could not gleam through any of the cracks in the crazy walls, and then, bowing stiffly, departed to take up his station by the main entrance gate. The chetniks sprawled out on the floor in various postures. Every man was soaked to the skin with

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ditch-water and perspiration, but strange to say, none was tired.

They were inclined to be restless. Several rose to their knees and crawled to the windows, rude openings in the walls, guiltless of any covering. Mileff spoke to them sharply, and they collapsed to the floor. It was not well to take any chances—not on our own account so much as because it would mean ruin to the farmer, did it ever become known that he had sheltered chetniks. And Mileff murmured in my ear that this man was a wealthy householder of the village, as householders go in Macedonia, and the village committee were anxious to educate him up to more earnest heights of devotion to their cause. So they had to be careful not to get him into any trouble.

Like all Macedonian villages, although it was little past midnight, Fortovishta slept. At least, it was quiet. Not a sound arose from its closely packed houses. Even the dogs were still. The giant mountains that towered up behind it threw back occasional echoes of barks from far across the valley, but around us the whole world might have been asleep.

The chetniks twisted about on the floor, and whispered together. Several lighted cigarettes, which they guarded in their hands. Gradually

the tension reacted upon us. Somebody cracked a joke, and everybody laughed. In a second, we were all laughing and talking, quietly, of course, but, nevertheless, as naturally as in a drawing-room.

They called upon me for a song and having been cautioned by Mileff not to be too loud, I sang *Waltz Me Around Again, Willie*, which was very popular in the New York music halls at that time. Something in the mad gaiety of the music caught the imagination of the chetniks, and they swayed their bodies to it, trying to hum the air of the chorus, while they chuckled at the grotesqueness of the whole scene.

Into this picture obtruded, through a shadowy trap-door, the head of the ancient farmer. He viewed the squatting figures of the swaying chetniks with amazement, and signified that we were to follow him. One by one, we crept down the ladder and out into the court-yard, leaping across the moonlit centre, into a lengthening shadow cast by the wall, where a stalwart militia guide leaned on his rifle.

Ten minutes later, after a hurried passage through the rocky streets of the village, we were safe in a court-yard that seemed strangely familiar to me. As we ascended the dingy stairs, the

impression became more fixed in my mind that I had climbed them before. The gallery, too, with its bunches of dried fruit and vegetables, suspended from the rafters, reminded me of an old friend. But no familiar face appeared, and I was very sleepy.

In the morning, I woke up feeling something soft dragging across my face. Opening my eyes, I saw a small kitten playing with a string on the floor, so close to me that its tail was flicking my nose at every gyration. I knew I had seen that kitten somewhere before, also. On the opposite side of the room, stood a serious-faced small boy, hands in his trousers pockets, who stared at me until he saw that I was awake, and then blushed deeply. I rubbed my eyes and thought I must be dreaming, for that small boy looked also as if he might be an old friend. Oddly enough, he looked expectantly at me, and at last murmured my name.

Then, I knew. He was tiny Iliu Ivan, and this was the house of his father, in which we had stopped our second night in Fortovishta. The rest of the family came in, shortly, and greeted me almost affectionately, so that for a few moments, at least, I felt at home and happy, as though with friends in my own country.



GIRLS OF GHERMAN.

Fortovishta is a village that hangs between the mountains and the plains. For reasons of convenience, I suppose, the Revolutionary Committee had classed it as a hill-village, and as the present phase of the cheta's wanderings was for the purpose of organising the villages in the mountains, on this side of the valley of Navarrokop it was deemed best to stop once more in Fortovishta on our way into the hills, so that Mileff could have another conference with the headmen.

I have forgotten to say that Strenitz, a member of the committee who conferred with Mileff in Gherman, had accompanied us to Fortovishta, and took part in all the conferences that were held. He was a compact, bullet-headed man, who talked very loudly and with the rapidity of a machine-gun. Evidently, he was locally regarded as a great orator, for all the villagers hung on his words.

To give Mileff a chance to meet some revolutionary sympathisers from an outlying neighbourhood, we spent two days in Fortovishta, changing houses at midnight. In the second house, we found Handsome Peter and his party of half a dozen chetniks, who had fulfilled their mission of starting the Drama despatch-bearers on their return journey to Bulgaria. Mileff gave them letters to the headmen of a village on the farther

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side of the mountains, and they started immediately on this mission, after hasty greetings.

The following night, we had a very funny march, although it was somewhat hard upon me, physically. Our destination was Banitchan, higher up in the mountains. We started about half-past eight o'clock, and pushed steadily over level roads until we came to a broad stream, which one could see, at a glance was unfordable. But, awaiting us on the bank, we found a detachment of militia from Banitchan with a pony and two mules to be used in getting across. In order that the beasts should not become too lazy, the kind-hearted fellows had loaded the panniers of their saddles with immense baskets of grapes, knowing that we would be hungry and thirsty after our march.

So, first we ate the grapes, and then, slinging our rifles on our backs, climbed onto the cumbrous pack-saddles. Pack-saddles, it may be well to remark, were invented to carry packs; not human beings. I was placed on the smallest animal of the three, a diminutive mule, who did not reach to my shoulder, but I never felt safe until he had lurched out of the icy water, and began to ascend the bank. My fancied security went to my head; I grew proud and boastful, and seeking to im-

press my equestrian skill on the villagers from Banitchan, I kicked my heels into the burro's sides and "getapped" to him. He started forward at a waddle, I lost my grip on the string-stirrups, the saddle veered hilariously, and off I went, my rifle-stock landing precisely in the middle of my back.

Not dismayed, after the rest of the party had been ferried across, I climbed on a larger pony; but before we had ridden a hundred yards his saddle slipped under him, and again I was hurled to the ground. The Banitchan militia rolled on the ground in convulsions of mirth, and Mileff grinned in a peculiarly sardonic way he had, when anybody except himself was playing the fool. On the rest of the ride I was assailed with constant jibes, but contrived to keep my seat.

We were lucky in entering Banitchan without arousing the dogs. It was the one time, I can remember, that we were completely successful. Immediately on arriving at a house on the outskirts, a conference was begun between the village committee and Mileff, that lasted until two o'clock in the morning. Throughout the next day, as well, Mileff was busy examining papers and reports, and talking to the stolid peasants,

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who crouched in a half circle about him on their sandalled feet.

Directly after supper that night, we started for Yoosdarroch, a lonely little mountain village beyond the great town of Navarrokop, which sprawls under the wall of the valley. Yoosdarroch so I was told, was the disseminating centre of discontent, for that section of the raon. It was the wildest and roughest night's march we had had since the terrible night of Osikovo.

For a short distance, we traversed the valley, taking advantage of the good roads, until it became necessary to turn at a right angle, and strike off into the mountains, to avoid the Turkish villages that were on every hand. We travelled through a maze of deeply cut gullies that ramified across the surface of the valley, threading a devious course in the darkness, that yet brought us nearer to the mass of the mountains, looming up blacker than the night. As was frequently the case on these marches, we had no path to follow. The patrol of militiamen who acted as guides strode ahead, instinctively picking out the easiest way.

Even so, the easiest way was not necessarily a pleasant one. We scrambled through tangles of briars and thorny bushes that scratched our faces,

viciously, and half-fell down abrupt slopes. Always, we had to be careful to make as little noise as possible. The barking of dogs, sporadic, but threatening, and piling up tremendous echoes in the stillness, was a constant warning.

Once, we came to a road, the main road which runs through the valley into the town of Navarokop, where are the governor's palace and the barracks of the soldiery. In single file, each stepping in the footsteps of the man ahead, we trotted across the road, white in the starlight. From some distance up the valley, came a rattle of arms, the sound of voices, and a trampling of feet. It was the Turkish patrol. Our line dropped, as by magic, into the bushes that grew waist-high beside the road.

The rattling of arms drew nearer, and with it the murmur which comes from a considerable body of men. We hugged the ground closer, and waited, unlocking the hammers of our Männlichers. On the road appeared a black shadow that rapidly took shape as a line of men, moving toward us. They pounded along, stirring up a veil of grey dust, and chattering aimlessly to each other. We, by the roadside, held our breath, literally. Not until the last file-closer had passed,

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did I dare to open my mouth, and then it was with an intense desire to sneeze.

When the noise of the askare patrol had died away, in the direction of Navarrokop, we took up our march toward the mountains. Before many minutes, we left the surface of the plains, and took to the foot-hills. The ground was elevated, and we could see more of the surrounding country. Huddled, here and there, behind shoulders of the hills, sparkled the lights of the isolated villages. A great blur of light on the southern horizon was the town of Navarrokop.

We went on higher, taking advantage of the cover of the bushes, whenever it was possible. Suddenly, to the right of us, a dog barked. We proceeded more cautiously, and in a few minutes could make out the light of a camp-fire, blazing in a clearing in the underbrush. One of the guides crawled forward on his knees to investigate, and the rest of us took shelter under the lee of a stone building that seemed half-barn, half-church. At last, he returned, pursued by savage sheep-dogs, at which he dared not shoot. The camp-fire marked the resting place of a couple of Pomak shepherds. This was no place for us.

But Mileff insisted on sending ahead to reconnoitre, before we proceeded. He wished to make

sure that the way was clear. So we crouched in the shadow of the empty stone building, staring at the distant fire, around which we could dimly make out moving figures. In the meantime, the dogs became bolder and dashed almost up to us, snapping at our throats. Their impudence made fat Giorgi lose his temper completely, and with a guttural string of Bulgarian curses, he snatched stones from the ground and pelted the yelping curs.

Fortunately, at that moment, the order came to march. In order to save time, we were marching practically directly over Navarrokop, swinging away from it, slightly, in a half-circle. Its lights blazed brighter on the horizon below us with every step. The thudding of drums and the blaring of bugles floated up to us, together with a continuous murmur, not unlike that which had emanated from the patrol, only many times larger in volume. Scattered clumps of lights were the outposts guarding the approaches to the town.

Climbing the summit of a ridge, the full glare of the lights burst on our view, and the town lay spread out before us, its streets and squares mapped in a glowing pattern. It looked so near that it was not hard to fancy one's self capable of jumping into the tower of one of the mosques. Actually, it was much farther away, and a con-

siderable distance below us. The chetniks stopped in their tracks to gaze on the picture. I do not suppose any feeling of poetic beauty or romance influenced them. They were probably thinking of the 3000 askares of the garrison, and the splendid pickings there would be, in the loot of such a Moslem stronghold. All the same, it was a picture, never to be forgotten—the starlit, silent skies, the gaunt, shouldering piles of the mountains, and below, the mazy lights and noises of Navarrokop.

Into our revery, with a jar that was all but physical, crashed a rifle-shot. We could not say definitely the direction from which it came, but it seemed to be just below us. Naturally, the first thought was flight. And we fled. At a dog-trot, the squad of chetniks and militia started off up the mountain-side, sloping in this place at an angle of nearly forty-five degrees. It goes without saying that they did not keep the pace for long.

Behind us, the steady rolling of drums, and the popping of Mausers, at intervals of a minute or so, egged us on. How long we climbed I cannot say. When we rested, worn out, the uproar had quieted, and Navarrokop had become perceptibly smaller, and less distinct. Yet it

seemed that fully as much of the mountain remained to be climbed. The valley was mapped out for us in the starlight as the town had been, and the picture was beautiful. But one does not think of these things, when one's tongue hangs out of one's mouth from thirst.

In the end, we conquered the mountain, and emerged upon its summit. It was cool there, so cool that we did not wish to stay. On the farther side a new trial awaited us. We had experienced ploughed fields, ditches, and rocky cliffs. This new barrier was worse. It consisted of long, sloping stretches of sand, fine, like sea-sand, affording no footing, down which one could only slide, for walking was an impossibility. Often, when a man had gotten half-way down one of these treacherous places, and was pluming himself on his success, he would slip, and proceed the balance of the distance on the flat of his back.

At the foot, a second line of mountains confronted us, not quite so high as those we had just passed. Up these we toiled, long after midnight. On their heights, we came to a sheep-fold, high stone-walls enclosing a tract of moorland. From the shadow of the walls, stepped a group of kilted mountaineers, the outpost from Yoosdar-roch, sent to guide us the rest of the way. There

was another hurried shaking of hands, a murmured "os bogu," and we had said good-bye to the men from Banitchan.

These mountaineers of Yoosdarroch, in whose hands we now found ourselves, were hardy, picturesque fellows, but unfortunately lacking in a sense of cleanliness. They were very good to us, however, and helped us along easy trails, into the great gash in the hills where their village lies, protected from the storms by the mountains that shut it in.

Yoosdarroch is as wild a village as ever was. A waterfall over the brink of the cliff, at the upper end of the ravine, sends streams of water through its streets—if they can be called streets—and its houses are perched at every conceivable angle. As often as not, one or two of the walls of a house consist of the mountain, itself. About the easiest way to get into the village, is to drop down from an air-ship. Otherwise, one has to climb up and down countless miles of rocky stairways.

I had distinguished myself by keeping my feet dry that night, but five minutes before reaching the door of the house where we were quartered, I slipped into a ditch. The villagers laughed, and cautioned me against making any noise; there was a handful of Pomaks in the place.



KRSTINA PETKOVA.
A woman insurgent chief.

At first, I thought our guides were trying to lose us, they wound in and out so, through the narrow streets. Presently, I perceived that because of the village's peculiar topographical arrangement, a more or less devious course was necessary. At any rate, when we were smuggled through a thick-set gateway, into a walled courtyard, I had no idea in what section of the village we were. To tell the truth, I don't believe any of us cared. It was nearly morning, and we were possessed with an overpowering desire for sleep. In a low-roofed room on the second floor, we unslung our knapsacks, and lay down in our sweat-soaked clothes to satisfy ourselves.

Late that afternoon, the village priest and some dozen others, headmen from various villages in the neighbourhood, as well as from Yoosdarroch, filed into the room and formed a solemn circle about the fireplace. All lighted cigarettes. It became apparent that this was a sort of council of war—perhaps one might call it a meeting of the village board of aldermen. Man after man, rose in his turn, and made verbal report to Mileff, telling the number of men in his district to be relied on, the number who had arms, and the extent of the militia organisation.

Cigarette smoke rose in swirling clouds to the

low ceiling, and the dying light of the sunset cast queer shadows in the corners, where the chetniks lay. It was a good opportunity to see Mileff at his best, in his particular art of handling men. These mountaineers were a turbulent lot. They had views of their own, as to the manner in which the war should be waged. Moderation held no place in their councils. Only the week before, a party of five had attacked and killed half a dozen askare cavalry, in a near-by mountain-pass. A collection of rifles, revolvers, and bits of personal trinketry were proudly shown us, as trophies.

It was against these patrols that the village orators were fulminating. It was never safe in the mountains, they declared. If a young girl was sent to watch the sheep, she was kidnapped by Bashi-bazouks. The fields were raided, the flocks and herds depleted. Not long ago, a few stray herdsmen had been wantonly cut up by some wandering askares. Were these things to be tolerated? Would the voivode stand by and see his people oppressed?

Mileff waved the speaker slowly to silence. He admitted all the wrongs the Macedonians had to endure. For what else was the revolution being waged, he inquired? But it was not always wise

to strike as first seemed best. Why not wait and think things over for a while? What was to be gained by striking swiftly?

The village priest, tall and gaunt, even spectral, in his loose black habit and high stove-pipe hat, stood up to answer him. He spoke in measured accents, pausing to pick and choose his words, quite the reverse of the excited villagers. It was true what the voivode had said, he admitted. All of it was true. They could not gainsay it, they of Yoosdarroch. Was not the name of Peter Mileff honoured throughout the raon of Navarrokop? But Mileff had just come across the frontier and was acquainted with only the more recent outrages. He did not know, by actual count, the number of burned farms and stolen women in the past months.

Long had they suffered, the men of the mountains, and the men of the plains had suffered, as well. Was it not time to strike? Was it not time to show these Turk dogs that the Christians had teeth? Why did the cheta have arms? Why were the militia armed? Of what use were the machine guns hidden in the mountains, and the electric batteries and mines? They rusted, to no purpose. Make use of them, he argued. The very next week the cheta should be mobilised,

with the militia, and Navarrokop attacked. In the flames of the burning houses and mosques and barracks, Europe would see a signal that her assistance was needed. The priest sat down, and his listeners applauded, with a silent intensity that was more impressive than the thunderous echoes following a presidential nomination.

For a space, Mileff sat silent, smoking his cigarette. Then he spoke, very quietly. I am sorry I do not know all of his speech. The entire story, told here, was translated for me long afterward. He explained to them as much of the European situation, as they could understand. He told them why it was that Macedonia was abandoned to her fate. He recounted in brief, stinging words the decrees of the statesmen of the West—that Macedonia was to be left in the hands of the Turk. Bulgaria's hands were tied. Where was the money to come from, for a campaign against Turkey? They must remain quiet, striving silently, always, trusting in the committee in Sofia to take advantage of every opportunity that came, to better their cause.

Silence followed his speech. Deep silence, that was bitter. An old man rose, and spoke in a quavering voice. It was true, doubtless, what the voivode had said. He knew much. He had

talked, doubtless with Garvanoff and Sarafoff, in Sofia, with Sandansky and Tchnerpaieff. He knew what was going on in the world. They of Yoosdarroch might be foolish, but it was not hard to understand. They suffered. Was it wrong for them to groan under the chains? And—he—all the old men like himself—they might never live to see a free Macedonia. He sat down, and for a long time the circle of men sat, smoking, without a word being uttered.

“This much I will promise you,” said Mileff, finally. “Any specific outrages reported, I will promise you to avenge. Justice is due to you, and justice you shall have.”

Our host came in at this moment, and invited the company to stop to supper with him. It is seldom that a Bulgar gives an invitation to a meal, and the offer was eagerly accepted. The meal, klepb and a sucking-pig, roasted whole, was carried in on the customary low table, and carved up with bayonets. We ate it amid much splashing of gravy and burnt skin. Later, our host produced a jug of sour wine, and we were in rapt contemplation of this, when a foot scraped hastily on the stairs, and a man, tattered and dishevelled, burst into the room. By his Männlicher, we knew him for a militiaman.

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Between his trembling lips, and the great pants of his breast, he told of a new raid that had been inflicted on a lonely farmstead, off several miles in the mountains. He, his father, and his brothers had been away, and in their absence a squad of cavalry had abused the women and stolen several sheep. His father and brothers were out hunting for the trail of the askares. He knew that the chetniks were in Yoosdarroch, and had come to them for assistance.

Now, Mileff was due early the next morning in another village, Laeske. And he had special reasons for wishing to avoid fighting at this time, principal among them, the imminence of Navarokop, and a fear that the Turkish authorities might discover that he himself, was back in the raon. This would interfere with some plans he had for the future. Yet, when the villagers offered to send a courier to Laeske, putting off his visit, he could not refuse the request of the poor fellow, who, leaning on his rifle, stared at him mournfully out of eyes, in which the life seemed to have died.

There was no doubt, as to the desirability of the move, among the chetniks. They were always spoiling for a fight, and they viewed the prospect with an equanimity that amounted to

contemplative joy. In five minutes after the determination had been reached, we were armed and ready to take the road, our host, a filthy old rascal named Demetrius, tucking loaves of bread into our knapsacks, together with a plentiful supply of boiled eggs. Demetrius announced, at the last moment, that he would accompany us on the expedition. Two of his sons were to go as guides, so this gave us, counting the messenger, a force of a dozen, plenty for the work in hand.

CHAPTER XII

THE FIGHT IN THE PASS

LOOKING back, now, through a perspective afforded by time, it is not easy, even so, to get a satisfactory view-point on those tempestuous nights of battle and death. The Macedonian struggle is over, they say. Turk, Bulgar, Serb, and Greek, all lie down, side by side, in peace and brotherhood. But it was not so a few short months ago. Like ravenous dogs, they went for each other's throats, and he was most pleased who shed the greatest quantity of his rivals' blood. Possibly in no other land than Macedonia, at this present day, could such a sudden and complete accession of submission have swept over the people. Macedonia, inured to bloodshed and terror, cast off the yoke at an instant's notice, when the time came. It may be, that she was preparing, subconsciously, for such a transition through all the weary years of crime and the avenging of crime.

On the night we left Yoosdarroch, I had a particularly good opportunity to see the Bulgar

peasant in his time of affliction. And I must say that there was a certain deadly, serious steadfastness of purpose, noticeable in the young man who acted as our guide, which went far to impress upon me a realisation of the stubborn qualities of his race's courage—a courage which, having set for itself an object of attainment, knows no other goal.

At the long, slinging dog-trot, which the mountaineer uses on occasion, in preference to his usual elastic stride, we sped through the silent night, under the twinkling stars that crept out slowly, as if afraid to reveal themselves to the land of misery. Our way ran over broken water-courses, paved with pebbles, and across dismal mountain-flanks, where the sougling of the wind through the pine trees was a weird elegy of sorrow. More and more stars came out, and still we trotted or walked. It had been cold when we started, but the constant exercise, and the heavy weight of ammunition and arms, made us perspire freely.

At a notch in the side of a mountain, on a wide plateau covered with waving grass and corn-stalks, we came to the violated homestead. A pool of blood smeared the doorstep, where a sheep had been killed to sate the first appetite of the marauders. To prove their ruthlessness, they

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had thrown the dead body aside as useless to them. A second man, young like the first, whose face, like his, seemed, in the light of Mileff's search-light, overcast with a profound depth of gloom and agony, rose from a crouching position by this same pool of blood, and in monosyllables directed his brother which course to take, to catch up with the father, hanging onto the trail of the askares. Then he, too, took his place at the rear of the line, and trotted or walked behind the hardy chetniks. He had no rifle; he vouchsafed the information that he had given his Männlicher to his father, who had none, in case he should come up with the askares. Ilia impulsively handed him an extra revolver, he carried in his belt. The man thanked him, dully, and we marched on, now under cloudy skies, beginning to lower with a threat of rain.

All through the night we marched, stopping every hour for a ten-minute rest. We made no sound, for we were edging into the enemy's country, and for the first time, I noted the use of an old trick of Indian warfare in America—that of covering the trail by making each man step in the footprints of the leader. Unless one has tried it, it is difficult to understand how tiresome it is, to be always under the necessity of stepping where

another man has stepped, and of choosing the ground on which to plant every footstep.

There was the faintest hint of grey dawn in the eastern sky, beyond the hulking mountain-peaks, when a low, shrill whistle came out of the darkness of a gully. Old hands at the game, the chetnik column dropped to the rocks, every man instinctively getting behind the likeliest and nearest bit of cover. A voice followed the whistle, calling "Bhotoff, Bhotoff," the universal password of the chetniks. Mileff answered, and an old man, whose straight figure gave the lie to his grey hair and beard, strode noiselessly toward us, moving with cat-like softness in his sandals, over the rocks. He was the father.

In short, bitter words he told of his pursuit of the raiders. A sweep of his arm up the mountain pass, indicated their position. He went on to say that they were bivouacking in a glen, waiting until morning to proceed, and that if we were expeditious, we might catch up with them. There followed a brief consultation, and then we pushed on, switching sideways, however, up the narrow gully where the old man had lain concealed. Some distance up this gully, we struck another one, running at right angles, and thence we followed several, always winding and twisting

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upward, until at last we found ourselves on the summit of a ridge, forming one wall of the pass. A goat-track, scarcely indicated, hovered upon the edge.

The old man and Andrea went forward alone, and after a five-minute interval we followed them, bending double, so that our figures should not stand forth against the sky-line. We had not gone far, when we came upon the advance guard, lying behind a mammoth boulder. They signalled us to drop beside them. Peering around a corner of the mass of stone, I saw that the pass had opened out into a miniature valley, the walls of which sloped gradually. A brook gushed along one side, and on its right-hand bank across from us, a camp-fire sent up a thin reek of smoke. To a near-by shrub half a dozen horses were tied by their bridles, and men lay on the short grass of the brook-bank. Three heaps of coloured cloth inanimate on the ground were the mother and daughters.

With a curiosity I could not check, I glanced at the face of one of the sons beside me, and then along the line at his father and brother. There was the same dull look of agony in every face, but their eyes blazed like live coals. At first we did nothing, beyond assuring ourselves that our rifles

were in order. Andrea made careful calculations of the range, and Mileff crept up and down the rear, making sure that the chetniks understood their orders. We were to fire two volleys at will and then charge.

“How about the women?” some one asked.

The old man interposed.

“It does not matter,” he said, grimly. “Do not think of them. They must take their chance. It might be as well should a bullet strike them.”

I could understand his meaning; in fact, there was no mistaking the look in his eyes and the gesture he made toward the coloured heaps on the ground. And I tried not to see where he aimed his rifle.

The voivode, from his position in the centre of the line, glanced inquiringly at his men. He saw a line of rifle-barrels levelled over the rocks.

“Heidi,” he exclaimed.

The mountain-walls echoed and re-echoed the crashing volleys. It seemed as though for miles and miles around the reports were caught up and hurled back again. There was no smoke-veil, and I could see the askares rolling on the ground, or running frantically toward the horses. One of the coloured heaps leaped to her feet, staggered forward a pace or two, and fell to the ground, her

hand clutching her side. It all happened very quickly, with the instantaneousness of vision of the moving-picture machine. For a minute, I pinched myself, to make sure I was not watching some lurid Bowery melodrama.

But, no, it was real. The chetniks were charging down the hillside, stopping to fire at the men and horses beneath. Far in the lead, the old peasant plunged along, absolutely reckless, apparently only bent on getting to hand-grips with one of the Turks. A single askare was left standing, and he was tugging at the bridle of a horse. Bullets spat on the ground about him, and chipped the branches of the bush. I cannot be sure of it, but it looked to me very much as though it was a bullet that freed his mount, by clipping off part of the twig it was tied to.

At any rate, the man leaped on the horse's back, and regardless of the banging stirrups, galloped off down the ravine, out of the medley of dead men and screaming wounded horses. When the first of the chetniks pulled himself from the water of the brook, it was to find a very slaughter-pen, in which the old peasant was the central figure, kneeling beside a dead girl. The second girl and her mother knelt beside him, but there was no look of prayer in their faces; there was

more of an expression of wonderment that Divine mercy could not have been showed to them.

We did not stay long—no longer than it took to loot the bodies of the dead askares, eat the meal they had been preparing (on the war-path one is not particular), and hold a short conference on ways and means. It would be doubly unsafe for us to go back to Yoosdarroch, considering that one of the askares had escaped. Demetrius and Mileff talked over the best thing to do under the circumstances. It was certain that the Turkish authorities would take the matter up. Parties of soldiers would be sent into the hills, as soon as the survivor of the squad reached Navarrokop. Perhaps before that he would meet an outpost. There was no saying how soon the pursuit might begin.

In this quandary, old Demetrius showed himself a strategist of the first class.

“It is certain,” he declared, oracularly, “that the Turks will pursue us. Therefore we must flee. Now, where is the last place you look for a mouse who has been raiding your sireeny? In the cheese-box, to be sure. Very well, voivode, then we will march to the mountain of Sveti-Constantin, which rises above Navarrokop, so near that you can hear the voice of the governor

demanding your head, and there we shall be safe."

At the same time, it was arranged that one of the sons of Demetrius should find his way back to Yoosdarroch, and have additional provisions sent to us, as soon as possible. The ancient peasant and his family seemed to have no plans. They shook their heads dumbly, in answer to all questions. Finally, Mileff turned to them, and asked if they cared where they went.

"There is no use in returning to our home," replied the man, sombrely.

Mileff thought awhile.

"Then you had best go to Bukovo, which is not far from the frontier. I will give you a letter to Yani Smirnoff, there, and he will look out for you, until there is a chance for you to get across the frontier. In Bukovo, you will be safe."

Had Mileff known what he was bringing down on Bukovo by that message, I do not think he would have sent it.

The message was written hastily, using Demetrius's back for a desk, and we parted, the main body bound for Mount Sveti-Constantin, Demetrius's son for Yoosdarroch, and the ruined family for the mountain fastnesses that shut off Bukovo from the rest of the world.

There is no need to tell how we marched until

the middle of the morning, when we arrived at a cave in the side of a mountain—a cavern that was not at all romantic, but shallow and uncomfortable, having the sole merit of being protected from observation by a screen of bushes and a lip of rock, that cropped up before the entrance. The march, was like many others, not quite so hard as some, because we could see our way.

Throughout the afternoon we saw nothing of the Turks, nor of any other people. Rabbits and birds were our only callers. Directly after sunset, we started on the final lap of the journey to Mount Sveti-Constantin. The road—and by road, I mean the way we took—led through mountain-gorges, for the most part. There were many swift torrents to be crossed, on slippery stepping-stones or tree-trunks, and into these we slipped, as often as not. At such times, we had at least an opportunity to satisfy our craving for water.

About one o'clock, we arrived at the foot of the mountain, on the side opposite from Navarrokop. Here, we halted for several hours, and rested. We picked out fairly smooth bits of sloping ground, and dropped on our backs, our knapsacks catching us about at the neck, and making a pillow not to be despised. While marching at night like this, it is customary to wear one's cloak slung over

one shoulder, so that when one wishes to lie down, all one has to do is to pull the garment over the other shoulder, and make sure that one's rifle is safely protected from the dew. In Macedonia, a man's rifle is his best friend; he is inclined to think of it before himself.

Halfway up the mountain, sunrise burst on us, with all its glories of colouring. Streaks of crimson, violet, purple, and emerald light shot over the profile of the eastern range, kindling the golden morning haze, and the dingy masses of rock, and the green blocks of forests into a tremendous conflagration, like the burning of a king's palace. We stopped, involuntarily, to drink in the glorious picture, and Mileff turned to me, a look of glowing pride on his face, and said, "Makedonia!"

Just below the summit of Sveti-Constantin, and on the side facing Navarrokop, we found a tiny level bit of table-land, surrounded by a dense thicket of trees and under-brush. This was an ideal place for our bivouac and we started to unsling our knapsacks, and make ourselves at home. But in an instant we were slinging them on again, and feverishly unlocking the hammers of our rifles.

A blare of bugles and a harsh thrumming of drums sounded, so it seemed, right beneath us.

Turks were climbing the slope, regiments of them, judging from the noise. The rolling of drums and the shrilling of bugles continued, rising and falling in volume. Other sounds took shape gradually. Men shouted orders, and sentries cried back and forth to one another. Suddenly, without cause, the bugles and drums ceased. There was a strained quiet, broken by a far-off cow-bell, tinkling on some pasture-land. Then came the long, whining drone of a Moslem ulema, calling to prayer from the minaret of a mosque below us. The cheta, spread out by instinct in a thin skirmish line, turned to trace the cause of certain peculiar gurgles behind it, and found Demetrius rolling on the ground, in mirth.

Giorgi, as usual, lost his temper and started in to kick him. Mileff pulled him off, and Demetrius laughed the harder. When he was able to stand up, he explained to us that the sounds we had heard were just the ordinary routine morning sounds of the town. It was waking up from its overnight rest, and resuming its labours again. The rest of us breathed more freely after we had heard his explanation, and Mileff trained his field-glasses on the streets of Navarrokop, through a hole in the bushes, jotting down notes and a rough plan, on a piece of paper before him.

CHAPTER XIII

DODGING THE ASKARES

ALL the rest of that day we lay on the summit of Mount Sveti-Constantin listening to the life of Navarrokop going on beneath us. At the regular hours, during the day, the ulemas came out on the minarets of the mosques and whined the call to prayer. Troops marched back and forth from the barracks to the drill grounds, and paraded through the streets. And caravans of ponies and ox-carts creaked in over the high-roads, east and north and west and south. For a town of its size Navarrokop seemed to be as busy as possible. But one could not get over the impression that perhaps the inhabitants of the town were not as proud of its busyness as they might be. It was a busyness of a decidedly military stamp.

We amused ourselves in divers ways. Mileff had a large sheet of pasteboard for use as a field-desk, and he set this up on a sloping rock facing the valley, with a sheet of drawing-paper tacked

to it. Then, with his field-glasses, he searched the country below him, noting down every gully, hill, bit of cover, trail, or road. When this was finished he proceeded to laboriously sketch a plan of the town, Demetrius at his elbow giving him verbal advice. One or other of them constantly kept an eye on what was going on in Navarrokop.

Giorgi cleaned rifles, and the rest of us dozed off, hoping that Demetrius's son, who had been sent back to Yoosdarroch after food, would hurry. Once there was a slight diversion. Ilia heard a rustling in the bushes to one side of the clearing, and went to investigate. A large snake was disappearing under a brush-pile. We all gave chase to it, but the reptile evaded us and got away. Later, in the afternoon, it returned, and when discovered fled a second time sliding through the underbrush like a chequered piece of whipcord. It was the only snake I saw in Macedonia.

About noon, a small party came up from Yoosdarroch with a donkey-load of provisions. We fell on them ravenously, and dined to the mess-call of the Turkish buglers in Navarrokop. Just before dusk, we started down the side of the mountain opposite the town. Near the foot, we stopped at a wind-break, erected for the protection

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of the sheep that feed in huge flocks on the pasturelands of the neighbourhood, where we were met by some shepherds, who shared their supper with us. It was not much of a meal, according to Western ideas, although there was plenty of it.

Still, I venture to think its oddity was a sauce such as one could not procure in many restaurants. Klepb and sireeny, with sheep's-milk whey, washed down by warm sheep's-milk, and grapes to cap it off, were a hearty feast. And afterward we made merry. One of the guides, who had accompanied us from Yoosdarroch, had a bagpipe much like the instruments of the Scotch Highlanders, and as the bulk of Sveti-Constantin divided us from Navarrokop, there was no particular call to be cautious. Anyhow, it is customary for the Macedonian shepherds, simple, primitive fellows, to divert themselves at their labours, with the pipes of Pan, to such an extent, indeed, that the echoes of their melodies are one of the regular noises of the hills.

The guide turned out to be quite a musician, and he "gar'd them skirl bonny." The wind-break was in a tiny glade in the mountain-side, a perfect amphitheatre in shape. Above it rose the hills. The sky was sprinkled with frosty stars, and a crescent moon barely peeped over the



"POCHEEKA"—A REST.

crest in front of us. It was such a night as one would have expected the witches to choose for their revels, for, with all the brilliance of the stars, there was a dimness to the darkness, a dimness that suffered things and shadows to show like spirit-phantoms, clear but vague.

When the wild, high-pitched notes of the pipe poured over the glade, the eerie effect was increased. The bagpipe wailed and screamed, and the mountains, piled around, threw back the call in mockery. It was not apparent, at first, what the guide was playing, but gradually his notes shaped themselves into a weird, wholly fantastic dance. There was no mistaking it. It was not the least bit civilised or modern. It was the kind of music to draw forth morris dancers from their rings, or fairies from the hills. But through it throbbed a strange commanding cadence that there was no denying. The Pied Piper's tune, I thought, involuntarily. Perhaps it was.

It had a strange effect on the chetniks. They leaped to their feet, and placing arms on each other's shoulders, formed a circle for the horo. Louder and louder, shriller and shriller, grew the music, rising at last to a piercing shriek of agony and remorse, human in its intensity of passion,

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at which the mountains mocked and gibbered. From this culminating note, the pipes quavered slowly to a lower scale, throbbing and mournful, always interlaced with the tinge of weirdness I had first noticed.

Taken in conjunction with the wild music, and the landscape harmonising with it in every detail, I have seen few stranger spectacles than that dance. Gravely and without any boisterousness, the chetniks hopped and leaped through the steps, the tremendous shadows they cast over the ground looking like familiar spirits, participating in the revels. In the distance the flocks of sheep were white blotches in the darkness. There was something peculiarly Macedonian in the picture, in the music, in the dancing men, who had put aside their arms for a brief span of minutes, to disport themselves as children to the crazy, throbbing music.

At ten o'clock we left the wind-break and marched into the mountains, bidding good-bye to the hospitable shepherds, who had befriended us. For two hours we pushed along, mostly over moor-lands surrounded by the hills. On the side of another mountain, in a dense thicket, we halted again, and bivouacked. That is to say, we were told we could get a nap, if it was possible.

We merely arranged our knapsacks as pillows, folded our cloaks around us, and lay down.

But it was impossible to sleep. The altitude of our camp was very high, and the chill cold of the fall night struck through our heavy clothing, as though it had been muslin. Of course, one reason why we felt the cold to such an extent was that the rapid marching had caused us to perspire freely, and the wet clothes were no protection against the night's discomfort. In our efforts to keep warm, we banked together like a litter of puppies, lying on top of each other, and huddled as close as we could get.

After an hour or so of this, Andrea and Big Peter joined us. They had escorted Dodor part way on his trip to Drama. The chetniks greeted their comrades heartily, and then Andrea and Peter, too, sought sleep. However, two more in the pile did not add enough heat to make a difference, and we lay shivering until just before dawn, when we moved a third time. Sheep-trails, running through piles of underbrush, led us over miles of desolate mountains and moors, to a notch in the side of a hill, overlooking a distant part of the valley of Navarrokop. Afar off, around a shoulder in the valley-wall we could hear the voices of shepherds, and at infrequent

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intervals, very faintly, echoed onto us by mountain sounding-boards, came reminiscent bugle-calls from Navarrokop, accompanied by rolling drums.

In this notch we camped, while one of the guides was despatched to the nearest village for food. We had several hours for sleep, before he returned with two of the village headmen and a donkey, bearing the provisions, cold meat, klepb, and sireeny. The headmen were Roumanians, as were all the inhabitants of the village in question. There are a number of Roumanian communities in Macedonia, most of them working with the Bulgar revolutionists. They are all against the Turks, and as anxious as any for a free and enlightened government.

Our visitors were distinctly odd-looking men. The Roumanians have very little Slav blood in their make-up. They boast of their descent from the Roman colonists of Trajan's time, and it is true that through all the centuries the Latin blood and tongue have held their own, with fair success, against successive invasions of barbarians. The country has been subjugated, and the people terrorised and enslaved, time and again, yet they remain dark-haired and swarthy, speaking a language far more like Italian than Russian.

The two Roumanians from the near-by village were typical of their race. Dour, well-built men, with bright eyes, they are far more quiet in their dress, appearance, and manner than the Bulgarians. Their village costume was made of a coarse braided cloth, blue in colour, that was substantial, though extremely plain. In their manner, they were pleasant and cordial, and they spoke Bulgarian fairly well.

I found, by a little inquiring, that the main reason why the Roumanians of this particular village, were working with the Bulgar insurgents was, that they laboured under the disadvantage of having a garrison of half a company of askares saddled on them, to keep and feed. Aside from the expense, it was not enjoyable to have constantly hanging over their heads the dread fear of massacre, which the Turkish soldier impresses on all with whom he comes in contact. So, secretly, because they were a timid people, and lacked something of the Bulgar's fierce, self-assertive independence, but nevertheless, whole-heartedly, they entered into Mileff's struggle against the universal oppressors.

We lay in the mountain-notch listening to the voices and wailing pipes of the shepherds until half-past six o'clock, at the beginning of the long twilight, when, having eaten the last of the food

brought us by the Roumanians, we commenced the ascent of the mountain. After gaining the summit, from which we could see across miles of rolling brown hills and valleys, painted a myriad of colours by the glorious sunset, we descended a short distance to a winding valley that gradually opened out into a tract of moor-land, dotted with rolling hillocks and clumps of trees, interspersed in the gorse and bracken.

As we were tramping along through the tall grass, Demetrius turned out of his place at the head of the column, and offered his hand to the voivode.

“Os bogu, Peter Mileff,” he said.

And then he turned to me.

“Os bogu to you, also, Smeet,” he murmured, and his voice broke. “Mia brot, mia brot!” (“my brother, my brother!”) he exclaimed, beginning to weep, and throwing his arms around my neck in a fervent embrace. We halted for explanations, and I learned that he had now to return to Yoosdarroch leaving us to the guidance of his eldest son. He embraced us all around, and then, sobbing still, he vanished around a shoulder of the mountain, reappearing near its top, a dot that waved a tiny arm.

He was a remarkable character, was old Deme-

trius, despite his dirt and rather greasy appearance. For me, he had conceived a considerable and peculiar affection derived from an admiration for my fancied propensities as a fire-eater. Being an arrant braggart, himself, he had an instinctive appreciation for similar qualities in another. I had endeared myself to him when I rose up at a council in Yoosdarroch, already described, and made a plea for an attack on the askares, delivered (the plea, I mean) in a lengthy oratorical effort in three languages. His pleasure was boundless, and he immediately adopted me as a brot, and I suppose that, to this day, if he is still alive, Demetrius has an occasional thought for his brot Smeet, who was so strangely fond of cold water—that, I may say, being one of my characteristics Demetrius could never understand.

But I have broken the thread of my discourse. Before Demetrius reappeared far up on the mountain-flank, we had resumed our trail, a twisting sheep-track through the grass, leading past several deserted cabins of the shepherds for use in stormy weather. At last, we came to a little brook that sang a clear melody down the centre of a glade, which broke the surface of the moor. Trees lined it in regular rows, as they border the canals in Holland, and I found it hard to believe that it

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was not artificial, and we would not presently come upon a mathematically arranged little town, spick and span and doll-like.

We were marching in open order at a rapid pace over the level ground, carrying our rifles in our hands, ready for use at a second's notice. Suddenly, we heard a noise beyond the brook's tree-border—the noise a man makes in calling to oxen. The chetniks froze into silence, crouching low to the ground, every rifle half-raised. A team of oxen emerged slowly on the bank, and after it, a bent stooping old peasant his long shaggy beard dropping over his sunken chest. Paralysis seemed to strike him, at sight of the chetnik line, and his lips moved soundlessly.

A glance was sufficient to show him a Christian, for he lacked the gaudy turban of the Pomak, and Mileff called to him reassuringly, while the chetniks sank into natural postures on the ground. It was some time, however, before the old man was able to speak. When he could, he told us in quivering tones, that at first he had thought us askares from Navarrokop, parties of whom had been scouring the hills for a couple of days past.

It was evident from this that the search for the chetniks, who had cut up the cavalry patrol in the mountains beyond Yoosdarroch, had been

prosecuted hotly, and it gave added incentive to our haste. We left the old man murmuring heartfelt wishes to the saints for the continued health and life of the cheta, and at a dog-trot headed through a gully into the heart of the mountains, again beginning to tower above our heads, at close range.

In the gully, the twilight rapidly melted into darkness that gradually became absolute. Pine trees cropped out of the mountain above us, forming a screen that excluded even the light of the moon and stars, and I had an uncomfortable fear that we had wandered away from the world, and lost it. At first, there was no regular path. Several miles up the gully, however, we struck off into another, and then pursued a mazy course up a mountain-side, following a goat-track. Sometimes, we were in the open on the wild mountain-flank, littered with boulders and tree-trunks, where it was not carpeted with long slippery grass; again, we descended into the infernos of the ravines, where mountain torrents clattered over rock-beds.

The crossing of these torrents, on stepping-stones or rude log bridges, was no joke. A favourite trick was for the whole line to join hands and cross sideways, each man helping his neigh-

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hour, as we had done in the Bulgarian mountains on our way to the frontier. In many places, the path clung to the sides of cliffs, dizzily high and steep. At one such place, a stream of water poured out of a spring in the mountain above, and flowing over the narrow way, had converted it into a slippery morass. A chetnik in front of me slipped here, and only a quick leap on Mileff's part saved him from crashing down through the pine trees that floored the valley below. For myself, I know that it was one of the nastiest spots I have ever encountered in mountaineering.

Having crossed this range of mountains, we came to a succession of valleys, lying between them and the next spur of the Rhodopes. There were Turkish outposts scattered all through these valleys, and the moonlight that became steadily stronger was not friendly to our enterprise. The caution the cheta used seems laughable, now. The scene impressed itself on my mind as an excerpt from some tremendous melodrama played on a giant's stage. The mountains around might have been constructed out of canvas, and the boulders that stubbed one's toes, of papier-mâché.

The orders were issued in whispers. We moved on tiptoe, and yet rapidly, taking care to step in each other's tracks, when we walked on soft



YANI SANDANSKY.
GENERAL ZONTCHEFF.

PITO GULEFF.
LUKA POPOFF.

earth, and utilising every rock or piece of grass-covered ground that offered. Every bluff was scanned with Mileff's binoculars before we passed it, and many a time we lay close to the earth, while the wailing yell of the askare sentries cut the loneliness of the night. Crouching in the shadow of a bold cliff, once, near midnight, we looked across a moonlit valley at an opposing cliff, which was crowned by a figure that moved uneasily from spot to spot. And now and then it wailed a long-drawn wolf-yelp, that was answered by other wails in the distance. Our rifles covered him all the time, but the askare never knew how near he was to death.

On the other side of the valley we assailed the second range, leaving all trails behind us for a space, and simply pulling ourselves, as best we could, up the steep face of the mountain. In the early morning hours we arrived at a sort of shelf, near the top. In the centre of the shelf were the fire-blackened ruins of a stone house—a common sight in Macedonia, where ruins of modern construction abound. Creeping vines clung to the sooty stones, but the rest of the shelf was bare of growing things.

A chill wind swept the place, and we shivered so that our teeth rattled. The view beneath us was magnificent, but that was small recompense

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for the physical discomfort. That the valley of Navarrokop was spread out like a school-atlas at our feet did not mean much, when we should have been glad of that school-atlas to use as a coverlet. Because of the prominent position on the mountain-side, we dared not light a fire; we had to rely on the animal warmth of our bodies for protection from the cold.

Eventually, we slept. I do not know how we managed to, lying on the hard ground, with only our cloaks as covering from the wind, that had frozen a skim of ice on the mountain-pools, but we slept. We were tired—wofully tired. And our tongues were so parched that they were swollen.

When daylight came, Mileff decided that we might light a fire, carefully. The chetniks crept around in the forest, searching for bits of dried wood, and soon we had a respectable pile of tinder in a glade, to one side of the clearing. Tall pine-trees shut off the valley, and prevented the light smoke that the blaze gave off from being visible, outside a radius of a few feet. Round the blaze we huddled, miserably, all the fight gone out of us, for a man must be more than a hero to stand cold.

With the advent of daylight came an intense desire for breakfast—and we had not even water

to drink. There are no springs on mountain-tops. It was plain that we could not get along without food and water, so the guide was despatched to the nearest village, Laeske. We saw him off down the mountain-side, and then gave ourselves up to napping away the hours until he returned. It could not have been more than two hours later that we were aroused by a thudding noise in the forest.

We sat up and looked around. Mechanically, each man grasped his rifle. The thudding noise continued. It was an axe biting into timber. No word of command was necessary to the chetniks. They spread out into a wide skirmish line, and crept softly into the timber. They did not need to count paces for intervals. These men were born soldiers. Not a branch cracked to mark their passage. Bending double, they strung a half circle about the spot from which the noise came. At the edge of a little clearing they halted, and peered through the branches.

A lone Bulgar peasant was spitting on his hands, preparatory to raising his fore-axe for a mighty stroke. Unconscious of his audience, he launched his blow, and paused to meditate over the flying chips. Mileff stood up, and the rest of us followed suit. The peasant jumped back two yards at

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least, his hand going by instinct to the knife that every Balkan native carries in his belt. The circle of chetniks grinned at his surprise and slowly a grin overspread the face of the peasant. It was a joke, and true to his blood, he had a keen sense of humour.

Also, the chetniks were known to him. He was one of the sub-chiefs of the Laeske militia, and he called Mileff by name, gripping his hand earnestly. His pack-pony browsed a little way up the mountain, and when he heard of our plight, he produced from the beast's panniers his own humble lunch of klepb and water. The klepb we refused to touch, but the water was as nectar from Olympus to our cracked lips.

The wood-cutter accompanied us back to the clearing by the ruined hut, and gave us the news of the country. He was still narrating various happenings when the guide, with two other men from Laeske, drove a well-loaded donkey up the last stages of the ascent into our midst. We promptly forgot politics and war. Every man became a cook and gave his attention to the sucking pig that was slung on one side of the donkey's diminutive back, to counteract the weight of the stone water-jars.

A spit was quickly built out of two forked sticks

and a straight one to lay across them, and on this, over the fire which we now dared to encourage, the piggy sizzled gaily. Big slices of klepb were spread beneath him, to catch the luscious brown gravy that oozed from his crackling skin, and despite the grapes that we gobbled by handfuls, out of the baskets that had also helped to keep the donkey's mind off his troubles, we waited with the direst impatience for the head cook, Giorgi, to announce that the roast was done sufficiently.

But it would be sacrilege to describe the rest of that feast. It was a sacred event in our lives, after the nerve-racking hustling through the mountains, and it is enough to say that the piggy died a noble death.

CHAPTER XIV

RUNNING THE GUARD

JUST as the early autumn twilight was settling down over the deep-cleft little valley, in which lies the village of Laeske, a shepherd on the hill known as the Table, which rises above the houses, sloping gradually to a flat expanse at the top, where the flocks graze, secure from molestation, was about to start his charges toward the shelters, erected for them, in the village court-yards. A far-off shout greeted his ears, and he looked across the valley at the opposite ridge.

Strung out in single file, the Mileff cheta was gingerly picking its way. Luckily, we had broad daylight to favour us, for the path ran most of the way unguarded, a mere shelf in the cliff, winding tenuously down to the plain. The shepherd answered our shout, and leaving the lad who was his assistant to superintend the gathering of the flock, he sped down the sheep-track that gave access to the village, from his side of the mountains. That was why, when we entered a

village in the daytime, for the first time, openly and unafraid, we found a sort of triumphal demonstration arranged in our honour.

Laeske is a village Christian to the core. Not one of its inhabitants has a suspicion of the Moslem taint in his blood or religion, and they all turned out to greet us—the priest; the schoolmaster, distinguished by his collarless shirt and European clothes; men and women in the quaint mountain costume; and a horde of children who clung to their mothers' skirts, and eyed us solemnly as if half afraid of the dreaded "Men of the Night." They all cried "Viva" loudly, and they brought out buckets of sweet, newly pressed wine which they served to us in our tin cups, while old women passed through our ranks pressing on us the luscious pears that make that part of Macedonia famous. They are of the consistency of jelly and melt in one's mouth. And there were big, rosy-cheeked apples like our own Northern Spies.

So, with cheering, chattering escorts on either side, before and behind, even with a brace of sturdy, puffing shepherd lads ahead, manipulating uncanny music out of bagpipes, we proceeded to the priest's house, where he passed in ahead of us, to remove his huge brogans and turn to give us a formal welcome, in the shape of a typically

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Oriental salaam. It was all he and the men of the village committee could do, to get us out of the hands of the mob. They had seen no chetniks in a long time, because their village was the most secluded of all in the raon and practically immune from the ravages of the askares, and they wanted to make the most of the cheta, while it was with them.

There was high feasting that night, in the course of which the remnants of the pig we had roasted in the mountains were consumed, and other delicacies done away with, as well. Afterward, came the usual counsel of war, that lasted until midnight and filled the room with cigarette smoke. During the following morning and afternoon, the chetniks were kept busy drilling the members of the militia.

The militiamen were formed in awkward squads in the court-yard or on the gallery, behind the screens of tobacco leaves, and put through their paces. And as an illustration of what they were to learn, the chetniks later gave a drill, themselves, showing the bayonet exercise with all the snap and vim of Bulgarian regulars.

At nine o'clock, we left Laeske. It was a black night, with no moon and few stars. Or at least, there was a moon but it was hidden by banks of

clouds; and the stars grew dimmer as time passed on. Up the same mountain-trail we had descended to the village, we took our way. Along the lower stages of the trail, men and women lined the way, murmuring "Os bogu" to every man as he passed, and slipping into our pockets some food, fruit, or delicacy. An old woman threw her arms convulsively around my neck, calling me "mia mumchee" ("my boy"). It was embarrassing, but well-meant.

We climbed upward slowly, so as not to wind ourselves, for we had a tremendous journey before us, no less than a quick push through the Turkish military enceinte of Navarrokop, to a second gap in the hills, in which lies the Bulgar-Turk village of Mushomista, but half an hour's march from the capital of the district. Below us, the Table outlined itself indistinctly as a gigantic mass. When a cloud settled low upon the rock it might have been a damask cloth.

It must be said, though, that the mountain-trails were the best we had encountered, and the cheta made good progress over them, to a glade by the bank of a mountain torrent, the trysting-place where the guides from Mushomista awaited us. Here we had a brief rest, and then started again, descending to the gravelly banks of the

torrent, so that we should not be visible as an undulating shadow-line on the ridge-back.

The cheta was entering the enemy's country. There were isolated Turkish outposts in these hills such as we had dodged the night before we reached Laeske, and raiding parties constantly roamed the country after dark. Indeed, that was their favourite time to travel. They had taken a leaf from the chetniĳs' book, learning that a night-attack is many times as appalling as an ordinary engagement. So we betook ourselves, once more, to the cautious tactics of the American forest-runners. Loose stones abounded on every hand, but the man who started one with his foot, no matter whether it was his fault or not, met with a muttered anathema. Quiet, always quiet. That was the one command. It was not permissible to whisper or to cough.

It seemed for a long time, as if we should never get away from the mountains, and despite their savage magnificence they became boring in their monotony. But we emerged toward midnight, from a defile, directly into the more level stretches of the foot-hills. In fact, right before us, not half a mile away, a blur of lights played on the sky behind a rolling pillow of the land. This was Navarrokop. If we had any doubts, they were

dispelled by the infernal rattle of drums, clanging of bugles, and a whole plethora of unwelcome noises. It was strange that, striking through the ruck, the mad notes of the tom-tom and cymbals accompanying the dancing girls, waxed persistent.

Like wicked schoolboys, we scuttled off, parallel with the ridge that protected us from Navarrokop. To our right, on the side of the mountains, rising like a town-wall, were the lights of the small Moslem villages that cluster around Navarrokop. Thus, we were between the devil and the deep sea. We had Mohammedans on either side of us; our only way of escape lay behind or straight ahead—and at that, it was a way bestrewn with perils of many sorts.

Ploughed fields met us at this point. I sometimes think that an apt punishment to be meted out in the Hereafter will be walking across endless miles of ploughed fields, with furrows not less than six inches deep, and irrigation-ditches at frequent intervals. The irrigation-ditches, I would only advise in the cases of the most hardened sinners. However, we tramped along, as best we could.

But I have forgotten to mention a most dramatic incident that marked our entrance on the plain. At the last turn in the gorge, a bird clucked like a man, above us amongst the heather.

It was too suspicious to be doubted, and of course we all had visions of a patrol of askares sweeping us with Mausers. We were reassured when the clucking ceased, and the "bird," a very heavy one, plunged down-hill to join us. It was a sentry from Mushomista. He warned us that there were several other sentries from the village, on the route we should take, to ensure that any extensive movement of troops across it would be discovered immediately.

Behind us, the lights of Navarrokop faded into dimness, and the noises that came from bazaars and barracks died with them. We were alone in the wilderness of furrows. Now and then, a clump of bushes or trees broke the perspective of the darkness, and out of one of these stepped a second sentry. He murmured his number, and fell in behind his comrade. Indubitably, the village committee had made sure that no rambling patrol should be given a chance to watch the entry of the chetniks into Mushomista.

The furrowed fields began to be interrupted by dykes, over which we climbed, and on the side of the hill twinkled a clump of tiny stars, the windows of Mushomista. A third sentry emerged from behind a dyke, and as we leaped across a muddy creek, just outside the village limits, a



MOUNTAINEERS OF THE REGION AROUND MUSHOMISTA.

fourth rose out of the shadow of a breast-high stone wall. This wall we had to negotiate very quietly. The Pomaks and Christians of Mushomista were hopelessly intermixed, and one had to be careful in any part of the village.

On the other side of the wall, we found a yard that opened through a wattle-gate onto a street,—that is to say, it was a street because it ran between the gateways of various enclosures. But its appearance was not calculated to give it such a title. Along this street we stole, trailing our rifles, hardly breathing. For the most part silence shut us in, but the wail of a baby, the grunting of a pig, or some such noise, was sufficient to start the sweat dripping on any man's brow.

At a tall gateway we halted momentarily, and the portal swung mysteriously open, a crack. Helter-skelter, we pushed into a slimy, cobble-paved yard, full of animals and fodder. A light showed in a distant corner, and toward it we felt our way. At the foot of a flight of steps stood a gnarled, middle-aged woman, who might have been eighty, for all her face testified. She looked sleepy, and held her clothes about her with one hand, while with the other she strove to uphold

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the lamp, and rub the sleepiness out of her eyes, as well.

I could not avoid feeling sorry for her, and guilty at having aroused her at such an hour. But she did not truly seem alive, when I came close to her. She became a part of the scene, a section of the scenery. We climbed the stairs and were ushered onto a gallery, hung as usual, with strings of onions, dried apples, tobacco leaves, and vegetables. Glancing in a small room as we passed, I saw a row of dark-haired children sleeping, all covered with the same blanket. They looked like wax dolls, put away by the real children, who had run off to play, elsewhere.

The room we entered was small and stuffy. The roof hung low, and the odours of the courtyard rose through cracks in the planks. However, it was not bad fare after the mountains, and we rolled blithely up in our cloaks, prepared to make the best of it.

Morning found us completely rested and anxious for hard work. But we could not even talk loud, much less indulge in any of the physical exercise that men, used to living by their muscles, crave. Turkish families inhabited the houses that abutted on our court-yard, and peering through the rude blinds over the two windows in our room, we could

see the women on the galleries, the children playing in the court-yards, and all the life of the household. Of course, they could see as much of what went on in our house.

From time to time, during the day, men came in to talk with Mileff in loud whispers. We were principally occupied in cooking breakfast and dinner. When one has nothing else to do, one can become exceedingly absorbed in the making of tea—after the Russian fashion, with a dash of rum in it. They have fine tea in Macedonia. It comes originally in long caravans, on camel-back from Asia.

In the afternoon, the schoolmaster, who had gone into Navarrokop for supplies, returned with a photographer, who was also chief of the militia of the neighbouring district, and head of the secret revolutionary post-office established in Navarrokop. He was a fearless man, that schoolmaster. All alone, he had walked through the Turkish lines in broad daylight into Navarrokop, where he had purchased a large amount of tobacco and writing-paper and collected the mail that had come for Mileff by revolutionary courier, travelling over the hills at night. Had he been captured with those letters on his person, the teacher would have had short shrift—the time it takes to

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pick a firing-squad, and order it to do its work.

He and the photographer, together with a number of other men who wandered in, talked with the chief, and while they talked, with time hanging idle on their hands, the chetniks squatted or lay around the room, napping or thinking. Sometimes, they broke into the conversation that went on; sometimes, they looked out through the window-blinds.

Possibly it was four o'clock, when Giorgi observed a man clad in a dirty peasant's dress toil up the main street, and knock at the gateway of the court-yard below. The chetniks, hidden behind the shutters, watched him curiously from the narrow windows. Interest in the conversation between the chief and his advisers waned. Others crowded to the windows to look. None knew why, but we all felt as if the arrival of this man portended something. There was a creaking and groaning, as the great gate was pushed aside, and then the newcomer vanished, to reappear again a moment later, in the doorway of the room. He was a young man, not more than twenty-five, and he had the straight figure and swinging stride of the mountaineer.

Instinctively, his eyes sought Mileff; his hand

clutched the door-post, steadying his figure which swayed with fatigue.

"I am of the Gherman militia," he began, panting for breath, from his long march. "I bear a message for Peter Mileff. The askares are afield in the hills beyond Gherman. Yesterday they burned the village of Krishvo, and Bashi-bazouks took the little son of my neighbour Vakaroff and tortured him. We are helpless, voivode, and we call upon the comitajis (another term for the revolutionary soldiers) for aid."

The voivode turned to our host, the school-master.

"Can you give us a guide to Gherman, to-night?"

The messenger leaped to his feet, fiercely.

"There is no need," he cried. "I go with you. Do you think that a man of Gherman——"

"Yes, yes," replied Mileff, soothingly. "That is true. But we are a small party. An extra man will not harm. We shall take some militia, in case we need help."

When the messenger had been fed, the consultation between the chief and the headmen went on as before, and the chetniks took up the entertaining task which always preceded a fight—they cleaned their arms. Supper was served, or rather brought in, and consumed, hastily,

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and the voivode ordered his men to arm themselves.

"We may start any minute," he declared.

But more men came to see him, and the talking drifted on and on. Tired already, some of us crept out onto the darkened gallery and made beds for ourselves on the rough planks. As I lay there, half-asleep, I felt a soft hand tucking something under my head, and glancing through my eyelashes, saw the woman who had lighted us up the stairs.

"Studaino, studaino" ("cold, cold"), she muttered to herself, and then brought out a blanket from the room where she and the children slept. I made a sleepy protest, but she patted my shoulder, kindly, and told me not to mind. Cuddling my head on the breech of my rifle, I willingly gave up the idea of a protest, and snoozed, blissfully. Just as I was wandering through glorious rose-gardens of dreams, a rude hand clutched my shoulder, and a voice whispered, commandingly, that word which came to mean all that was disagreeable to wearied bodies.

"Heidi, heidi," urged Mileff. "It is ten o'clock. We march at once."

CHAPTER XV

MARCHING TO BATTLE

WE stole down the stairs into the court-yard that night, by the light of a flickering match, carefully guarded in the greasy cap of our host. The village about us was sunk in darkness, and only a few stars were reflected in the stagnant pools in the yard as we felt our way along the side-wall of the court-yard, toward the gate, carrying our Männlichers under our arms, with the hammers unlocked, and the magazines filled.

I stumbled over a sleeping bullock, kneeling in the mud, and my rifle clanged softly against a stone. Fat Giorgi, ahead of me, turned, and swore softly in guttural Bulgarian. Otherwise, there was nothing but the "slip, slip" of the sandals in the mud. The gate swung back for us, noiselessly, making a crack wide enough for a man to squeeze through. In the street, where the darkness was almost as dense, the houses stretched on either hand like blank cliffs, toppling forward with every additional story. Along the centre

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of the way brawled the usual open sewer, a tributary of a mountain stream, diverted from its course.

In a few minutes, the village was blotted out in the night, and scrambling over a stone fence, the cheta traversed a stretch of meadow-land, and leaped an irrigation-ditch into a corn-field. We were tramping through the furrows, when a figure rose from behind a stack of stalks, and hailed us. One might think that the experiences of the night before, not to speak of innumerable other such nights, would have inured the chetniks to this kind of thing, but I could feel the line stiffen behind me. I know my own rifle rose to my shoulder, and I think the dim figure must have been covered by a dozen guns.

"Who goes?" hailed the voivode, in Bulgarian.

"Number Four," replied the figure. "All is safe. The upper valley grand patrol passed an hour ago. Good luck go with you, comrades."

The figure sank back behind the stalks, and without answering, Mileff marched on after our guide. Our line struck off across the valley, in a direction that would take us in a semi-circle, roughly speaking, around the town. Mileff's plan was to push as silently and swiftly as possible through the outlying Turkish lines, saving by this

manœuvre a considerable distance we would have to march if we avoided them entirely. He had a great and justifiable contempt for the Turkish sentries.

After perhaps an hour's march, we heard in the distance, but very distinctly, the drums and bugles in the barracks at Navarrokop. We halted, at the sound, for a brief rest, and had hardly progressed from this point when we were again startled by a noise in front of us—the clank that a rifle makes when it is shifted from one arm to another. Apparently, we had run foul of a Turkish sentry. One of the militiamen crawled forward to investigate, and the remainder of the cheta clustered about the chief. The militiaman soon returned for instructions. It would be easy to kill the askare, he declared. The dog seemed half-asleep. The others murmured fierce assent.

But Mileff refused to consent. It would not be wise, he argued, to kill this askare, and leave his body to be found by the next patrol, when it passed. Certainly there would be an inquiry, and then some of the neighbouring villages would suffer.

“No,” said the voivode, decisively. “We will march around this sentry. Is there not some other way?”

He turned to the guide.

"Yes," replied the latter, sullenly. "But it is not so good."

"That is enough," said Mileff, firmly. "We cannot take needless risks. There are plenty of Turks to be killed beyond Gherman."

About a mile from the sentry, we halted a second time, to let a patrol pass by. A clump of bushes grew in the field, and we lay breathless in their midst, while the Turkish column tramped past. It marched in column of fours, officers on the flank. Nothing was said, save an occasional word of command. There was something very impressive in the sturdy, trudging pace. We could not make out individual figures. It was more like a piece of machinery being shifted off a stage.

The highroad, over which the patrol had marched, was one of the few decent roads in that part of Macedonia. It was level and straight, and its surface was distressingly clear, as it wound its way up the valley. When the troops were out of sight, we skipped across briskly, one at a time, so as to make as little show as possible in the growing moonlight. A couple of fields the other side of this road, we encountered a long earthwork, and climbed over it into a ditch.

full of water. It was part of the fortifications of Navarrokop.

In the middle of the valley, we came to three swift mountain torrents, too deep for stepping-stones, and no bridge was available. There was nothing for it but to wade in, holding each other's hands, and digging deep into the beds with our staffs. Midway of the third stream, was a sand-bar, upon which we paused for breath. The icy water literally drove the air out of one's lungs. As we stood in a huddled group, imbibing freely from the mastica bottle, a low hail came from the bank before us. There had been so many of these sudden appearances that we merely raised our rifles, mechanically, and dropped to the sand.

But the hail changed to a peculiar whistle, and my comrades leaped recklessly to their feet, and plunged into the water; for they knew the men on the opposite bank for the militia patrol from Gherman; and our march was half finished. While we rested on the bank, and resumed the blistering potions, the militiamen from Mushomista, who had accompanied us so far, went down the line, shaking hands, preparatory to setting out on the perilous trip back to their own village. They were a plucky set of youngsters.

We did not dare to wait any longer, for Gherman was nearly four hours' march away, over fields and foothills, and the night had merged into early morning, and the crescent moon had risen. They showed me a light that twinkled in a crease, between two mighty hills, as a watch-lamp that was to be our guide. It looked very near, and at first I was encouraged, but an hour of steady marching failed to bring it appreciably nearer.

Our road into Gherman led through the rice- and corn-fields which are its wealth. A portion of the way we toiled through mud and water, waist-deep. Several times, showers of shooting-stars darted across the sky, vivid streaks of pale white light, against the dark blue. The first flight was watched open-mouthed, and some thought the stars were signal rockets sent up from one of the outposts, as a warning of our presence; but we were wrong. The artillery of heaven was in a sportive mood.

Once again we suffered a fright, just as we were entering the outskirts of the village. The enormous bulk of the acropolis of Gherman, crowned by a rambling pile of tenements, that in an olden day formed a proud monastery, was directly above us, wrapped in the melancholy silence that is the concomitant of bygone great-



ONE OF THE OLD MOUNTAIN MONASTERIES.
Frequently found in Bulgaria and Macedonia.

ness. Of a sudden this silence was shattered. Music that seemed unearthly broke out, followed by voices wailing a doleful chant in chorus. What was it? Shivering with apprehension, enhanced by our fatigue, we gripped our rifles and stared, suspicious of the very shadows.

A militiaman of the Gherman patrol whispered something to Mileff, who chuckled and gave the word to advance. Around a corner, we got a different view of the monastery hill, from an angle that permitted us to see the village church, white and stately in the moonlight, its windows gleaming with candles. It was in the church that they were singing, singing a mass in praise of some old saint of the Bulgars, while the armed chetniks in the street below gazed up at the lighted windows with awestruck faces, unmindful of the dawn that was stealing over the eastern mountains.

Having climbed a boulder-littered sheep-track up the monastery hill, we were admitted to a shadowy court-yard, and conducted by a flight of rickety stairs to a room on the second floor. Here we simply unslung our knapsacks, placed our rifles conveniently close at hand, and rolled up in our cloaks, wet clothes and all. The chant that swelled from the church windows served as a lullaby.

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We slept all that morning, and in the afternoon Mileff heard the reports of the village headmen. My old friend, the schoolmaster, he of the portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots, came in and told his story, and with him a number of others. All dealt with the depredations which had been recounted by the messenger. There was a long consultation afterward, between the village committee and the chief, and finally Mileff announced that he would disguise himself and go into the Turkish village of Dolan, where there was a small garrison, to learn the disposition of the troops.

The chetniks were against this plan,—which the villagers favoured,—for two reasons: first, because they knew it meant deadly danger for Mileff; and secondly, because they could not share it with him. They regarded it as distinctly unsportsmanlike, for him to go off on such a fascinating undertaking, alone. Mileff, however, had made up his mind and that same afternoon he had his beloved beard shaved off, borrowed a peasant costume, and procured, through the village committee, a passport made out to one Constantine Ivanoff, carpenter and builder.

With a young militiaman of Gherman, who volunteered for the purpose, he started off im-

mediately on his perilous venture. But, first, he kissed us all, ceremoniously, and tucked away in the folds of the voluminous sash that was part of his disguise, a sufficient dose of strychnine and an automatic pistol—one of the kind that fires ten shots as fast as you can pull the trigger. It is very handy for holding a stairway or a street. We were sorry to see him go. It was a frightfully dangerous thing to do. One who has never been in Macedonia, and seen, from the inside, the cruel system of repression that existed during the revolution, can form no adequate estimate of the danger. He had no more than an even chance of escaping.

Because there was an affair of great moment toward, much care was expended in keeping our presence in the village a secret from all who were not in the confidence of the revolutionists. The following night, when we moved to another house, we slid out of the doorway, into the shadow of the house-wall, dodged into a second doorway, and were piloted down a succession of ladders, through a bewildering series of sub-cellars and underground passages.

An aged crone, carrying an evil-smelling kerosene lamp, led me by the hand, and I shall never forget how I laughed when the two of us stumbled over

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a pig. By some white magic, the lamp was saved from exploding, and the old lady even deigned to honour me with a cackle, which strict consideration determined me to pass for a laugh. There were animals and chickens everywhere. The place was a maze of subterranean stables, and we continually fell over kneeling oxen or donkeys, which grunted and glared at us in obvious disgust.

It seemed as though we had travelled miles, when we ultimately reached a tiny hole in a wall, through which we were pulled by a woman who stood at the other side, with a lighted candle flickering beside her. She hurried us through her house and into another street, a crooked lane that did not follow the same course for two house-lengths. We ran almost to its end and into a third doorway.

Andrea was in command, and like his mates, he fretted as the hours slowly passed and no news came from Mileff. Time dragged, terribly. Our only occupations were playing with the little daughter of the family who were hiding us, and skylarking with each other. Once they stole my revolver, and then delivered a long homily in Bulgarian and French, on the sins of being careless with one's weapons.

On the next day the message came. We were to meet the chief at eleven o'clock that night, at a clearing on the mountain-road from Dolan. Word had also been sent to Kortser to meet us at the same spot, with his detachment of seven men. All the dispatch said, in addition, was that a party of askares would pass over this road in the early morning.

Right after sunset we started, leaving the village by a backdoor trail that dived into a ravine and kept us hidden, until we were on the moor above the town. Not a light showed in the squat houses. The people knew that the comitajis were marching, and one cannot be too cautious in Macedonia. From the church came the faint notes of a liturgy; the priest was celebrating a mass for our success. And, so, as we had entered Gherman to the strains of churchly music, we departed in the same manner.

The way we took led over the intermediate foothills, towards the main range, seemingly very near in the clear atmosphere. It always led upward, twisting around and taking the ascent at right angles to make it easier. Once in a while, we came to a stretch of level moorland, or the trail followed the ridge of a spur. While the moonlight was in one sense an assistance, it also

made the adventure more dangerous. Under the clear blue Macedonian sky, one could see easily across the valley to the opposite mountain-wall, miles away, even distinguishing the jagged pinnacles, and tracing their every outline. Our guide, a gnarled and ancient shepherd, strode on in advance, leaning on his staff. No man of his age but a Bulgarian could have taken such a march, and set a pace that tired even the hardy chetniks.

I suppose we had been marching an hour, before we conquered the first line of peaks, and emerging on the saddle-back of a mountain, looked across a valley filled with pine-trees, at a second barrier, higher, steeper, more inaccessible. Now the way led downward. The cheta moved in single-file, each man carefully stepping in the tracks of the man in front, except when we came to open, moonlit spaces.

We had marched barely a quarter of an hour along the saddle-back, when, from around the shoulder of a projecting spur in front, came the angry barking of dogs. Consternation was expressed on every face. The barking drew nearer. If we wished to escape detection we had but one alternative—flight. And we flew ignominiously before a dozen angry dogs. Still, they pursued us, and, in despair, Andrea ordered the chetniks to

take cover in the underbrush that bordered the path. At this, the dogs halted, and we could hear, between their barks, the crashing of the bushes, as their masters followed them to investigate the disturbance.

A brace of minutes passed, and the crashing in the bushes ceased, although the dogs barked with sporadic violence. Andrea sent the guide and a militiaman forward to scout. They left their rifles and drew their knife-bayonets. With these clinched between their teeth, they vanished silently, on hands and knees, into the dimness. Five minutes later we heard a reassuring whistle, and a voice called :

“It is safe, comrades; they are shepherds from Gherman.”

I have a confused recollection of a hasty greeting from a little knot of bushy-whiskered men, dressed in dirty sheepskins, one of whom chased off the foaming curs with a sweep of his tall staff. Several others came up, and spoke in whispered ejaculations with the chief; then placed themselves at our head. A third man took his place on the flank by my side. He said something to me in Bulgarian and seemed surprised when I answered: “Os som nay Bulgarsky—Amerikansky” (“I am not a Bulgarian—an American”). “Te chetnik”

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("Thou art a chetnik"), he asserted. "Da, da" ("Yes, yes"), I said. He laughed. "Amerikansky chetnik, hey?" ("An American chetnik, hey?"), and he laughed over his joke all the rest of the brief time he accompanied us.

We passed along the edge of a wide moor. Under the moonlight, the sheep stood in serried white masses, looking like piles of sea-foam. Dogs crouched threateningly, and barked at the invaders. And all around stretched the plain, sparkling in the glorious silver light.

The rest of the journey was a nightmare of difficulties. We reached, at last, a highroad, a Macedonian highroad, littered with boulders as big as houses. It led through a pass in the mountains and in the daytime was much frequented. This made it necessary that we should leave no trail, picking out the spots of grass, stones, litters of leaves, anything to avoid leaving a footprint. The road, itself, was a mass of sand, into which one sank to the ankles, and it went upward, constantly, higher and higher.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ROADSIDE AMBUSCADE

AT eleven o'clock, after five hours' marching, we knew we must be approaching the rendezvous. A little spring bubbled out of the rocks, to the right of the road, and we took turns sucking the water up with our parched lips. As we were doing so, some one hailed us from the shadows that barred the road, and Mileff and his guide stepped into the moonlight. I had always realised that the voivode was held in considerable affection by his followers, but I was surprised when they made a concerted rush for him. Laughing, he held up one hand to motion for silence, and the welcome, perforce, was tendered in whispers.

Andrea got the first word with him, murmuring a hasty report on the events of the past two days. Giorgi handed the chief his rifle and ammunition belt, which the fat one had brought for him, so that he could enter the fight fully armed. The rest of them swarmed about him, again becoming so

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many schoolboys, begging and entreating to know what he done, and what sort of a fight he had arranged for us. For, so implicit was their trust in anything Peter Mileff did, or said he would do, that they never doubted for a minute he had arranged a fight which would be absorbingly interesting, and, at the same time, productive of much glory.

But before he would tell us anything, the voivode insisted on counting noses. Including himself, we had a dozen rifles; the guide did not count, and was not expected to stay for the fighting. Had we heard anything from Kortser? Seen any signs of his passage, along the road? No. Then, we must wait for him to come up. There was no occasion to worry; it was perfectly conceivable that Kortser would be later in arriving, because he had a longer journey to make.

Having satisfied himself that our party was prepared to go into action, Mileff led the way to a glen beside the road, where we seated ourselves in a circle about him, and he told his story. He had reached the village of Dolan without any adventures, his passport satisfying every official he encountered, and at the village had requested to be shown to the Turkish commander.

To this official, Mileff confided that he was

anxious because of the unsettled state of the country, and desired to locate where he could be sure of protection from the various marauding bands. The chetniks, he said, were very dangerous men and terrible thieves. As the chief recounted this part of his story, the circle about him rocked in silent mirth.

Now, the askare commander was a kindly and well-meaning man, and he listened to Mileff's tale with attention, assuring him that he could safely come to Dolan.

"I am using great energy in repressing these chetniks," he said, "and my men are sparing no efforts to hunt them down, whenever it is possible. In fact, I am dispatching a detachment into the mountains, late to-morrow night, to look for a band that has been reported in the neighbourhood of Gherman."

Being crafty, Mileff did not appear curious, but when he left the askare, professing exceeding admiration for his wisdom and courtesy, it was with full information concerning this detachment, and the disposition of the Turkish forces in that section of the raon. The detachment, numbering twenty men and an officer, was of the same strength as our own would be when Kortser arrived, and it had left Dolan, by this time, for Ossian in the

hills. That was why we were huddled in the heather by the roadside.

"When Kortser comes we will take position," announced the voivode. "We must be careful about this. I intend to strike such a blow that the askares will be wary of murdering harmless farmers, in the future."

But an hour passed, and Kortser and his men were still missing. It was not safe to remain longer beside a public highroad, so the cheta left the thicket and climbed to the summit of a ridge, overlooking the road.

Under the circumstances, sleep was impossible. We had been warm while marching, but on the mountain-top in the chill wind that comes after midnight, it was horribly cold. Our light cloaks were no protection, and our bodies, recently soaked in perspiration, shivered and ached. For greater warmth, we crowded together, and the man who was underneath was the most envied.

When Kortser failed to appear at the end of two hours more, we descended the mountain to the clearing on the road. This clearing was quite extensive. In fact, it was a limited plateau, covered with fallen tree-trunks and tangled underbrush. Along the edge, we constructed a series of rifle-pits, each large enough to contain



TRAIKO KITANCHEFF.
DAMIEN GRUEFF.

BORIS SARAOFF.
GEORG DELTCHEFF.

one or two men, and so placed that the fire from each pit enfiladed that of another, and a body of men coming into their range was subjected to a cross-fire. It was a very deadly ambuscade.

The pits were hollows scooped out of the ground with a bayonet, and reinforced by logs and small boulders. These, in turn, were masked by branches and scrub pines, which we hacked down with our bayonets. My pit, in which I was alone, was about the centre of the line, and the farthest back from the road. A hundred feet to my left were the chief and Peter, and less than that distance on the right was Ilia. Andrea and the man who had accompanied the voivode were stationed at the edge of the wood. They were to give the chetnik call, at the approach of the troops.

Our work done, we lay in the pits to get what rest we could. The troops would not be likely to pass much before dawn. The Turks had learned all the tricks of the tyrant in that bitter warfare, and they knew that the terrors of an attack at dawn, when the helpless villagers were still asleep, would be the most exquisite torture they could devise.

I found my hollow very comfortable, after the bleak mountain-top, and the hours of hard march-

ing. With a pile of fir-boughs for a mattress and blanket, I fixed myself an abode of Sybaritic luxury, and despite the command that none was to sleep, I am sure that I closed one eye. There was no excitement. It is astonishing how easily one can mould oneself to the spirit of a new life. I knew that it was between three and four o'clock in the morning, and that in the States it must be six hours earlier. I pictured the crowds pouring out of the theatres along the Rialto, and thinking of the rough fare I had been having, yearned hungrily for a seat in Sherry's or at the Martin.

It was in the midst of these thoughts, probably lasting an hour or more, that my real self, which was still in the Balkans, became aware of a sighing whisper, quivering on the air, that penetrated the night like the breeze through the trees in Central Park, late in April. I had totally forgotten the signal, and only aroused to a sense of what it meant, when Mileff's siren answered. The troops were coming.

I shook off the pine boughs that covered me, and dragged my rifle from its position inside my cloak, where I had placed it to protect the breech from the slight dew. I was ready. All I had to do was to loosen my revolver in its holster and unbuckle a compartment in my ammunition-

belt, so that I could get at fresh clips of cartridges quickly. I poked the barrel through a hole I had made for it, in the screen of my pit, and strained to catch some sound of the enemy.

The night was perfectly still, but for the barking of a restless dog, miles away in some hill-village. In the east, the sky was reddening slightly. The birds were still asleep. It seemed strange to me that there was no more noise. Then I heard something softly—the barely perceptible shuffling of feet in the dust of the road.

I can't remember that it made me excited. My one feeling was one of exultation at the trap the Turks were walking into. I thought of the eleven other rifles, and the lead-swept area of death they would create. I never had a doubt of the result of the fight. It was like getting up in the morning when one is very young, to go on a bird's-nesting expedition. I chuckled at the idea. Naturally, these reflections took up rather less time than it takes to tell them.

At this moment the Turks debouched into the clearing, marching with rifles on their shoulders and bayonets fixed. There were five sets of fours, besides an officer on horseback, and a brace of pack-ponies, which trailed after the column. The askares marched on, unsuspectingly, at

the steady, plodding gait which in its day has carried the Crescent to the gates of Vienna. As they came opposite his pit, in the centre of the clearing, Mileff shouted to them in Turkish. I do not know what he said. It did not matter. It was simply the signal for us to shoot.

The brushwood that fringed the little plateau seemed to spit fire. The flashes darted vengefully from behind bushes, boulders, and tree-trunks. I worked my gun as fast as I could pull the lever and eject the empty shells. As I fired the fifth cartridge, I saw the chetniks leaping from their coverts, on either hand. I jumped to my feet at the same time. I was intoxicated with it all—the pungent smell of the powder, and the wild, savage delight in killing, which must come from some primeval strain in the depths of our being.

To my left, Andrea, Peter, and the chief, charging on the knot of paralysed askares, struck up the stirring *Makedonsky March*. It was a magnificent picture, in the half-light of the dawn. Six or seven bodies sprinkled the ground, the result of our first volley. The Turks were beginning to fire wildly, and the bayonets glinted cruelly, as we charged. None of our men was hit. The askares were panic-stricken, with two exceptions.

The officer was shot through the shoulder, but

he shifted his sabre to his left hand and ran at us, yelling crazily. I did not recognise his words at the time, but afterward I came to the conclusion that he must have shouted the old, old battle-cry of Islam: "Al-lah-Al-lah-il-il-Al-lah." Ilia pistoled him as he ran. Another askare sprang forward after his officer. He came at me, his long Mauser levelled. My rifle was empty; it was shorter than his, and I realised that if he ever reached me, it would be his game.

My revolver was swinging loose from my neck, by a cord, and I grabbed at it. At least, I reflected, I'd get seven shots at him. Just as I raised it to fire, I heard a cry of warning, and Andrea leaped between us. My bullet went over his head. Without waiting to raise it to his shoulder, he fired his rifle at the Turk, holding it between his arm and his body. It was a splendid shot, and Andrea made it certain, by meeting his foe full-tilt. They went down in a kicking heap, and for an instant I thought the askare had contrived to get his bayonet into the chetnik. But Andrea rose unhurt, and the Turk lay still.

The fight was over. Eleven Turks were scattered over the plateau—all dead, for, of course, no prisoners were taken; and the rest had fled. We dared not wait to pursue them—not even

to spoil the bodies. Five minutes after the first shot had been fired, we were tramping over the mountains. Such wounds as were distributed among us, slight cuts and bruises from musket-butts, were bound up as we marched.

Never halting, we marched until well into the morning. It was like the other marches I have described, except that, if it was possible, we were even more careful about covering our trail. We did not follow any particular route. Our guide led us by the quickest and shortest ways to our destination, as the bird flies, over brooks, precipices, morasses and through forests, where one was in imminent danger of losing one's eyesight. About ten o'clock, we heard the ringing blows that axes make on tree-trunks. The sound came from a valley below us, and we halted in a thicket, sending two men forward to reconnoitre.

For an hour, the chetniks lay shivering in the forest awaiting the return of the scouts. At last, the two crept back and reported that the axe-men in the valley were Bashi-bazouks of the Dolan garrison—a wood-cutting detail. They explained the situation of the party to Mileff. It was not quite as big as ours, and the Bashi-bazouks were strewn the length of the valley, making it

impossible to attack them all effectively at once. But there was only one path out of the valley, for pack mules laden with timber, and we bivouacked on the opposite side of the mountain from this trail, within a few minutes' brisk march, to wait until they should start for home. Mileff thought that a second blow, coming so soon after the first, would make a more lasting impression.

This was a chance to rest. The sun came out warmly, and we found a few scraps of food in our knapsacks, which were greedily devoured. Sentinels were posted near the road, and the chetniks off duty took a nap. Shortly before three o'clock, the sentry nearest the road came running into camp. The Bashi-bazouks were on the march. Our toilettes consisted of slinging our rifles over one shoulder, and giving our bodies a twitch to get rid of the kinks contracted by lying on the ground.

My knapsack slipped at the last minute, and I was delayed, while I tightened a buckle. There is nothing more terribly disheartening than a mishap of this trivial nature, at a critical time, and my fingers trembled so with nervousness that I had to command every bit of will-power to steady them. I was the last man into position, and as I emerged on the edge of the road, Andrea,

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next in line, signalled violently to me to drop in my tracks. I did so, unlocking the hammer of my Männlicher. My bayonet was fixed.

It was a beautiful October day. There was a keen snap in the air, and the sun shone brightly, to compensate for it. The birds sang all about us, and the mountains ringed the horizon like banks of blue mist. The chetniks had disappeared from sight, but I knew that they stretched in a long line, on my right, toward the entrance to the clearing.

Suddenly, a dab of colour, a green and red turban, showed in the opening of the bushes, through which ran the trail, and behind it came other garish head-dresses. Above them projected long Martinis or Mausers. I heard the first man call back to one in the rear, and a laugh answered him. Like an echo, came the "pah" of a rifle.

The line of chetniks leaped to their feet from the shrubbery, and the rocks reverberated with the cracking of their Männlichers. The Bashi-bazouks screamed in terror, and one or two fired their rifles, for I distinguished a different tone in the firing. I saw one man topple over like an empty flour-sack hit with a stick, and another ran about yelling hideously, with an arm hanging limply as



TAKING COVER FOR THE AMBUSCADE OF THE BASHI-BAZOUKS.

The man with the rifle raised is knocking the towel off the branch.

if it did not belong to him. Mileff leaped on him fiercely, there was a flash of his bayonet, and it was all over. The remainder of the chetniks broke their line, and rushed at the fleeing Bashi-bazouks, singing the *Chant of the Chetniks*. Now and then, they stopped to fire, and a squad searched the underbrush carefully, to make sure there were no wounded seeking cover. They found one poor fellow, but he was dead.

Having accounted for the enemy's casualties, the voivode whistled loudly for the men to come in. They returned reluctantly; their blood was up, and if they had been allowed, they would have followed the Bashi-bazouks to Dolan. Our casualties were nil in this encounter, and we felt quite cheerful as we started off with renewed vigour over the hills toward Kovatchavishta. It was five hours' march away, and we knew that they would be five hours of as rapid marching as our feet could stand, but the chetniks were the happiest men imaginable. The whole line, as it leaped from rock to rock or grass-plot to grass-plot, never leaving a footprint to help the trackers who would be on the trail in a few hours, hummed gaily the little revolutionary *chansons* the people sing in the cafés in Sofia.

There is no special reason, I suppose, why that

afternoon and evening of desperate marching through the Rhodopes to Kovatchavishta should have imprinted itself so indelibly upon my memory. But it did. Perhaps it was because, subconsciously, I had realised that my Macedonian adventures would soon be nothing but a memory to look back on.

And it was such a glorious day! It was the kind of day to breed heroic deeds. The snap in the air made one throw out one's chest, with a pride that was not sinful because it was surely Heaven-sent, and the golden autumn sunshine flooded everything. Marching, fighting, suffering, hunger and thirst,—all these became endurable, as they seldom are. On a cold, dreary day we would have been a set of disagreeable cynics hating our best friends, and the world about us. As it was, we had ever a kind word for each other; if one man showed weariness for a minute, two of his comrades sprang forward in a vain attempt to relieve him of some of his load; why, pudgy Giorgi, cleaning the crimson stains from his bayonet by thrusting it into the earth as he walked along, sang cheerily of love and home. We made light of our discomforts, and thought only of the welcome that was awaiting us in Kovatchavishta.

In all the world, I think, there is no more beauti-

ful country than the Rhodope Balkans, when the rainless autumn weather holds sway, just before the first snowstorms of the winter come swirling through the passes, blotting out trails and valleys, and isolating the mountain villages, one from another. The snow was late that year—which was a mighty fortunate thing for the chetniks, as I shall have cause to relate, soon. The mountains that ringed us on every side were still clothed in their forest verdure, in which predominated the hardy Balkan fir—a tree, indeed, which seldom bows its head to any storm. Taken altogether, the massive brown and green bulks of the mountains, streaked with the purple heather, backed by the spotless sky, were a picture long to be remembered. And in the picture, we were nothing more than a far-flung line of leaping, hopping men who took an hour to gain the summit of a single colossal ridge.

It was yet early in the afternoon when we left the scene of our encounter with the Bashibazouks, and the sun had not set as Mileff paused on the brink of a declivity, to scan a valley before him with his field-glasses. No living signs could be seen in all the vast expanse of tumbled brush and woodland. The voivode cased his glasses, and blew a long blast on his siren. No answer

came. Again he tried, hoping that Kortser, who, he knew, must be somewhere in the locality, would hear.

But still no answer came, although the thin, reedy wail of the siren seemed to float away on the air, and then return to us, rebounding from the mountain-wall that must have been five miles away. The cheta gathered around the chief, and listened eagerly to his talk with the guide, the man who had accompanied him to Dolan. It was imperative that Kortser should learn of our presence, if he was in the neighbourhood. For some unknown reason, he had been unable to join us in time for the fight that morning, but he must have made part of the journey, anyway, and so well did the chetniks know the enormous tract of country that they fought over, that, between them, Mileff and the guide knew where to find the sub-chief, to within a mile or two.

Stepping forward to the brink, again, Mileff cupped his hands to his mouth, and sent a thundering hail across the wilderness beneath. "Bho-toff!" he called, "Bho-toff!" The call boomed out on the forest stillness, quieting the noises of the birds.

Christo Bhotoff is one of the national heroes of the Bulgars. He was a poet, of more than

national repute, who died in Macedonia at the head of a cheta, and whose name is used as a countersign and password. It is surprising how far it will carry, on a fairly still day. As proof of this, after Mileff had called several times, we could all distinguish what at first we took for an echo, but which soon became audible as a reply. Some one, far away on the opposite mountain-wall, was calling "Bho-toff!"

The cheta covered the five miles across the valley in a little more than an hour, and as we toiled, panting, along the farther side, Mileff hailed again. A reply came back, distinctly, from the mountain, directly above, and a figure leaped from behind a brush-heap. Six other figures followed it, bounded over the brush-heap, and ran down toward us. They were Kortser, Handsome Peter, and five others. As Mileff had supposed, his orders had reached Kortser too late for his detachment to come up in time for the fight. Kortser had pressed on, however, hoping that he could help in some way, at least.

Twenty strong, the reunited cheta trotted off once more toward the sunset. The rays sparkled on the undulating line of rifle-barrels, and, despite their fatigue, the men stepped out bravely, finding time to tell each other all that had passed.

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For Kortser and his men had not been idle, either. They carried in their belts a curious collection of cimeters, revolvers, and quaintly-hilted knives, mute testimony of a goodly take of loot.

At eight o'clock that night, we climbed down the steep road that leads to Kovatchavishta, already wrapped in darkness. No welcoming committee awaited us, because we were not expected, but from the shadow of the first house stepped an immense man, whose Männlicher, slung over his shoulder, looked like a toothpick. He gripped the hand of the voivode.

"Welcome, comrades," he said.

It was Nicola. He took us to the house of his brother-in-law, and we slept a very long time, for we had been on the march twenty-six hours, and eighteen hours without water.

CHAPTER XVII

A MESSENGER COMES

TWENTY men in one rather small house make living uncomfortable. Especially is this true, if beneath the house there is a stable. We all slept well that night in Kovatchavishta, but when, from habit, we awoke in the early morning, our nostrils were greeted with an odour that sent us hurrying out onto the verandah—where the odour was worse. For the court-yard teemed with goats,—white goats, black goats, black-and-white goats, angora and albino goats, all kinds of goats, of all sizes—and all smells. Bells tinkled on the necks of most of them, and they seemed to occupy their time by trying to butt each other over the wall.

The chetniks held their noses and watched the gyrations of a small, tow-headed lad who, with a pail in one hand, dashed through the press of animals, seizing one whenever he could, to milk her. This milking process appeared to be a high art. The boy's work was interrupted more than once by efforts to butt him over, but somehow he

contrived to dodge the lowered heads, and by slipping under bellies, hugging the ground, and constantly changing his position, he filled his pail to the brim, and clambered the low wall about the goat-pen, without spilling a drop.

Some of the goat's milk was served for breakfast, but it was more than I could stand. The Macedonian goats are allowed to run practically wild, and there is a peculiar musky flavour to their meat and all that is about them. Breakfast was an interesting meal—not because it was sumptuous though. Huge loaves of bread were distributed, in sections; tea, without milk, was served in tin cups, of which there were not enough to go around, and there was also the goat's milk for such as preferred it.

No, it was not the food that made the meal notable, but the men who ate it. Twenty chetniks, as well as a number of local militiamen, were in the groups that filled the room—a very queer and varied gathering. Beside the members of the chief's personal band, there were several men belonging to other detachments, and a couple of militiamen from Gherman and Kovatchavishta. Among the chief's followers one noted an attempt at uniformity. Otherwise, only the diversity of colours and taste could be said to be consistent.

One man wore a faded fez, picked up after a skirmish. The militia men wore no hats at all.

They had hung their rifles around the wall, and at the head of the floor-space on which each man had slept, their ammunition belts and knapsacks and cloaks were piled neatly. Their revolvers, of course, they never took off, not even when they slept. Most of these twenty men had not seen some member of the cheta for a long time, and the result was a perfect babel of conversation.

The one topic discussed was the breaking-up of the cheta. That night it was to split into three parties, one returning to Gherman, one leaving for the southern part of the raon, and one waiting in Kovatchavishta. This was considered necessary, because no reason existed for keeping so many men together and their numbers made them more difficult to hide. To the chiefs, this was perfectly plain, but the chetniks openly expressed their disappointment, at having to give up the dignity of belonging to what they regarded as a truly formidable body of men, and once more becoming members of mere pickets or patrols.

When I said that the cheta slept well, I should have excepted Handsome Peter. Handsome Peter was suffering from a badly ulcerated tooth, that had made his cheek swell out like an egg-plant.

All night he had moaned and groaned, under the terrible pain; for it was terrible pain, and Peter bore it as pluckily as a man could. For the past few days he had lived on raw eggs and tobacco which he chewed with a view to deadening the agony.

Mileff was something of a doctor, and he saw that this could not go on. The man was becoming worn to a shadow; he had great dark circles under his eyes, and his nerves were on edge. Now, the law of the cheta, in respect to the lame and the halt, was an adamantine law: a man must be worth while or else he must be abandoned. The pace was too hot for men who had others beside themselves to look after. And, also, a man who has lost his nerve is useless as a chetnik. So Mileff had Peter stretched flat on the floor, and eight men piled themselves on his arms and legs, while the voivode crouched over his chest.

Andrea stood by a brazier, heating a ramrod in the flames. Peter watched him, tense and motionless. He knew what they were going to do to him. Mileff had offered to do it, and he had consented. But you could trace his feelings in his face; it strained visibly, and the tiny muscles under the skin flicked and jumped continually. His eyes burned like big hot coals. And in the

brazier the ramrod, turned in the flames, glowed white-hot. Andrea lifted it, and stepped across the room to the man on the floor.

Handsome Peter shut his eyes for a moment, and then opened them. He whispered to Mileff, and the chief brushed his hair back from his forehead. What do you suppose he whispered? Just a request that they should be careful of his hair. He didn't want his ringlets burned. The men holding his arms and legs took a firmer grip, and simply sat on him, as Andrea handed the white-hot ramrod to the voivode. Mileff commanded the chetnik to open his mouth. His eyes shut, the man obeyed him, those tiny muscles leaping and quivering, under the tense skin.

Mileff grasped Peter's lower jaw, held it open, while he peered in at the bad tooth, and, then, with the most exquisite gentleness, he thrust the ramrod into the open mouth. There was a distinct sizzling sound, and the figure of the chetnik quivered from head to foot. An ordinary man would have fainted, but in a minute after the men who had been holding him released their grip, Handsome Peter staggered to his feet. His face was pale and drawn, but aside from that, he looked and acted as if he was in little pain. He

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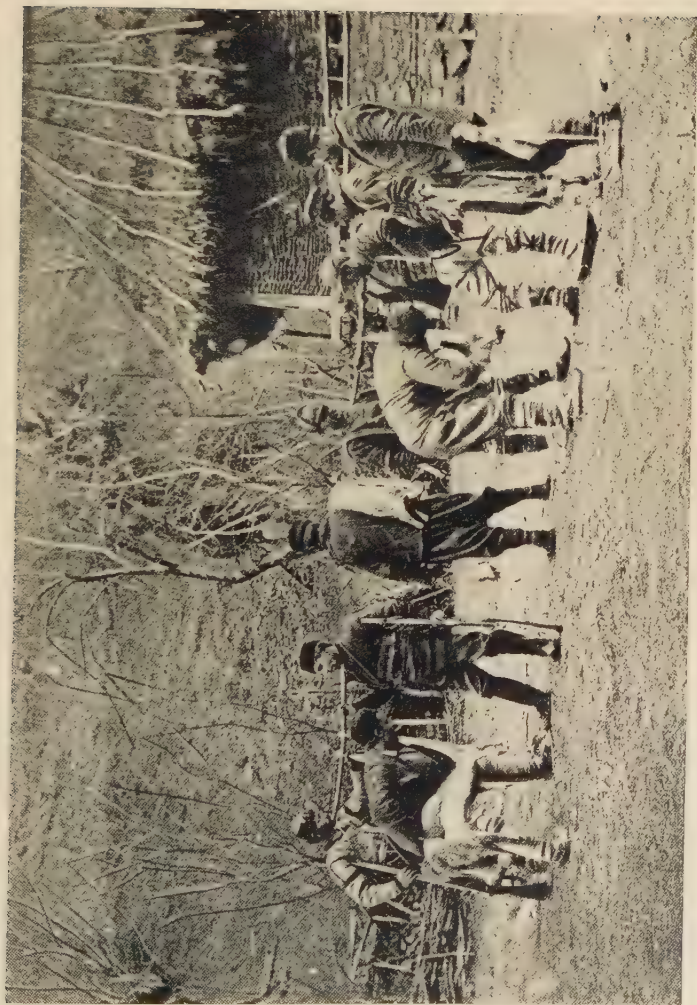
said he felt much better, and, indeed, never complained of the tooth again.

The morning dragged slowly into the afternoon, and sitting on the gallery of the house, behind screens of mats, the chetniks, most of whom were dozing in preparation for the evening hike, were electrified by a chorus of shouts in the street below them. Of course, there was one thought in every man's mind. Askares? In a desperate, hustling mob, we pushed through the door to the rifles, stacked in the sleeping-room.

But even before the chetniks were fully armed and ready to fight or run, the cause of the disturbance tumbled up the stairs from the court-yard. He was a shepherd, clad in dirty, greasy sheepskins; his face and eyes were wild and haggard; and he panted, as he dragged one foot after another. His first word seemed to justify the chetniks' fears.

"Askares!" he said, leaning against the wall for support, his tongue lolling from his mouth. "Askares!"

That seemed to be all he could say for the moment. The chetniks crowded about him, eagerly listening, staring, but wordless. They knew too much to talk when serious business was to the fore. The chiefs would do the talking. Mileff



PREPARING A MEAL FOR THE CHETA.

pushed his way through the crowd, a mastic bottle in his hand. The man clutched it, eagerly, without being asked, and gulped down a long draught of the hot liquor. His breath came easier, and he relaxed his grip on the wall, standing alone.

"I come from Bukovo," he said. "You are Peter Mileff, yes? I have a message for you. The askares are marching on Bukovo. Many of them—an army. They are going to wipe us out. They have sworn that the village shall burn, and all its people die or starve on the hillside. We are helpless, and we ask for the chetniks' aid."

It is a curious thing to watch the blood-lust creep out on men's faces. I could see it all around me. The militiamen, who had expected to have to return to their peaceful homes within twenty-four hours, were chuckling joyously to themselves. You would have thought somebody had offered them a new lease on life. They alternately listened to the man's broken story, and split into groups that slapped each other on the back and bubbled over with anticipation. For, of a certainty, there would be a fight—oh, a grand fight, much bigger than the one on the road. And they would all be in it. There would be many askares

to kill, and perhaps there would be plunder. Your Bulgar is a calculating person, and he is not above appreciating the contents of his enemy's pockets. How would they do it? Ah, Peter Mileff would see to it. Were they sure they could win; there were many askares—yes, even an army? They laughed, hugely amused. Why was Peter Mileff talking to Andrea and the village headman so earnestly, in the corner, yonder? It was ridiculous to doubt the outcome.

In the meantime a few clustered around the man, drinking in his words. Briefly, his message was that a battalion of infantry, with a mountain gun, between four and five hundred men in all, was to start that night for Bukovo, the news having been brought from Navarrokop by an insurgent courier, who had stolen through the lines. The reason for the move was not clear, but the messenger thought it was because Bukovo had sheltered the family the voivode had helped to obtain outmashtanyea on an askare patrol, in the mountains near Yoosdarroch. News of their presence in the village had leaked out, probably by means of one of the innumerable Turkish spies, and the soldiers had resolved to get outmashtanyea, in their turn, on the people who had the temerity to harbour slayers of askares. That was

the brutal law of the revolution. To give aid to either side was to become an enemy of the other, and to lay oneself open to the most extreme punishment.

Mileff asked the messenger several sharp questions, and then dispatched members of the Kovatchavishta militia to Gherman and one or two more villages for help. He knew he could not begin to raise so strong a force as his opponents had, on such short notice, but he was resolved to do his best. His plans had been made on the instant. All his orders directed the militia chiefs, and any of his own chetniks who could be picked up, to march at once to the Pass of the Seven Pines, a cleft in the mountains which the Turks would have to traverse to reach Bukovo. The most the chetniks could do would be to hold the Turks back, and give the villagers a chance to escape into the fastnesses of the mountains, or across the Bulgarian frontier. The cheta marched at once. It didn't matter whether there were spies on the hills, this time. A half-loaf of bread was served out to each man, and ten stalwart youths of the militia joined our ranks.

As the cheta defiled from the village street onto the road up the mountain, the younger men near the head of the column started to trot, so

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impatient were they, and only the voivode's stern command made them realise that they had hours of back-breaking hard work ahead of them. It was the middle of the afternoon when we started, and stopping once an hour for a breathing-spell, we pushed over the rocks until sunset. At sunset we stopped long enough to eat a few mouthfuls of bread, and continued again. Our guide, striding beside Mileff, was the messenger who had brought the tidings.

That march was like many others, so there is no necessity for describing it. It was in an oblique direction toward the Bulgarian frontier, and it seemed almost like going home again. How could we know that some of the men who pressed on so doggedly were never to see home again? We did not think of that, as we marched. We dared not sing out loud, but many a man in the ranks hummed softly to himself, and chuckled when he heard his neighbours humming the same song.

In the dense blackness that comes after midnight before the grey light of dawn steals over the hills, we halted on a high spot in the mountains. So black was the night that we could see nothing about us, and as we were deadly weary, we lay down and slept, forgetting, for the time being,

the fight that was in prospect. But the first light of the morning awakened us.

I could see that we were at the summit of a narrow, twisting defile, which sloped from our feet in either direction. At our backs was a broad valley, showing fields and houses, which last were Bukovo. In front of us, was a mass of mountains, without definite shape. They simply rolled away, dimly, in the half-light, one on top of the other. One could not even see where one peak began and the next left off. They were a chaotic jumble of primitive, sinister forms.

Dominating the foreground of the picture, was a group of seven pine-trees at the top of the pass. Most of the needles had dropped from their scraggly branches, making a soft bed on the hard rocks of the ground below, where we had thrown ourselves, and through the branches a keen wind whistled. It was cold at the summit of the pass; the chill struck into one's bones. In sympathy with the wind, the hollow places of the rocks, and the tree-boughs sighed, drearily. They seemed to be very tired. Even an eagle which rose from one of the trees, screaming with alarm at his strange company, winged lazily toward the plain. The whole scene was tired and cold and desolate. There was an unmistakable chill about it.

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Presently, a group of men climbed up from the village, and talked with Mileff. They were not panic-stricken. They did not weep and moan. But there was a certain awful sadness in their eyes that has haunted me. And they looked hopeless; all their movements suggested lethargy. Mileff spoke to them cheerfully, and pointed to the chetniks, busy gathering firewood.

"I shall have many more before the day is done," he told them. "We shall make a good fight for it."

They asked him what he thought they had better do, and in return he queried them as to the time it would take the askares to arrive, the condition of the roads leading into the village, and so forth.

"We can hold off the askares all day and part of the night," he said, at last. "That should be sufficient to give you a start for the frontier, if you leave at once."

The villagers did not even look surprised at his decision. They accepted it, as a matter of course, and shortly after they returned to the village, a thin line of people and animals commenced to stream across the valley toward the frontier, lying behind a pile of dim mountains. The sun had not fully risen.

Members of the cheta had lighted fires in the shelter of the seven pine-trees, and lay about them, eating the black bread that was their sole ration. When they had satisfied themselves, the voivode sent two parties, one down the pass to act as an outpost, and the other to the village to secure more food. Within the next hour a party of reinforcements arrived, and additional squads of militiamen, and half-a-dozen strange chetniks, were in by nine o'clock, swelling our effective force to about sixty men, all armed with modern, breech-loading rifles.

As fast as the additional squads came up, they were inspected by Mileff, and assigned to one or other of the detachments of the cheta. He commanded the centre, Andrea commanded the right wing, and Nicola, the left. Shepherds, who were thoroughly familiar with every inch of the hills, were sent out to supplement the outpost, and preparations were made to give the askares as stubborn a resistance as possible. The position was as strong as one could wish for, under the circumstances. Winding and steep, the pass in no place offered a favourable chance for a charge, and at the several turns we established reserve barricades, to which to retire after the askares had driven us from the lowest one.

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The camp at the summit of the pass, in the shade of the seven pine-trees, was used as a base of operations. A score of men toiled at the foot of the defile, where it gave on a valley like a mammoth spoon or bottle, piling a rude breastwork of boulders and tree-trunks, blown down by countless tempests, and at every place where a few boulders could be easily rolled together to form a barrier, effective against rifle-bullets, other chetniks were at work.

I should say it must have been shortly after nine o'clock, when we heard a succession of dropping shots, dying off to silence. Evidently, the shepherd sentinels had come into touch with the enemy. For perhaps a quarter of an hour, the mountain echoes were silent. Then they awakened again, this time to far greater volume. A number of baby volleys were discharged by the unseen contestants, and the shrilling of the chiefs' whistles summoned the chetniks to their places behind the first barrier. Mileff's centre was strung across the pass. At one side was Andrea, his men extended up the mountainside, as high as they could climb, and Nicola had disposed his force similarly. From the front, not a man was visible. All an enemy could see were a few boulders and tree-trunks.

The time fairly crawled along. Once, just after the last firing died away, I went up to the summit for water, brought from the valley in large jugs. Stopping a minute beneath the whispering pines, I saw the exodus from Bukovo, that pathetically long, thin line trailing off toward the far-away mountains, now deep blue in the sunlight. The village was deserted, and a big gap showed between it and the rear of the column, the head of which stretched as far as I could see. I wondered if somewhere in its ranks were the family who had been the fortuitous cause of all this confusion.

About eleven o'clock, luncheon of a primitive sort was served in the rifle-pits—that is to say, there was a sufficiency of victuals of all kinds gathered from the deserted houses, and the men took whatever they could get. In the midst of the meal, the firing broke out for the third time, sharper, closer, ringing with a distinctly hostile note. Instead of fading into silence, it billowed and rolled, in swelling volleys that played a regular prelude of martial music with the echoes.

The spoon-shaped valley before us, on almost the same level with the preliminary slopes of

the pass, was quite bare. Even the birds and wild rabbits had fled. From beyond its farthest wall the firing rumbled with a warning sullenness. And it rumbled louder, louder, always louder.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LAST STAND OF THE CHETA

Up and down the line of men that stretched across the pass, you could hear the rippling rattle of breech-blocks opening, as the cartridge clips were shoved into the magazines. Then came the slithering sound of bayonets drawn from their sheaths. The cheta was ready. It listened to the firing beyond the farther wall of the valley. Suddenly, a figure appeared in an opening of the pine-trees. Its back was toward us; a second one followed it. They raised their rifles to their shoulders simultaneously, and fired at something we could not see. Another man joined them, and then another. They retreated toward us, slowly at first, but quickening their pace, as they left the shelter of the rocks for the open valley.

By their dress we knew them for the shepherd sentinels. There were four of them in the little clump retreating backward across the valley; there should be six. Where were the two missing

ones? We were answered. A fifth man, a sub-chief of militia, hurried out of the bushes at a trot. He ran after his comrades, but half-way to them he turned and fired at the trees he had left. At the same moment, jets of white vapour broke from the trees, and the man spun around again, and crumpled up in a shapeless heap. More jets, coupled with pin-flashes of flame, sprang from the trees and bushes. For obvious reasons, the little patrol of shepherds hurried toward us at a dead run.

It was evident that they needed assistance, but Mileff did not wish the Turks to learn how strong a force they would have to encounter; so only half a dozen of the best shots in the cheta opened fire. The range was rather far for the short Männlicher, but they had some effect. The askare skirmishers retired temporarily, and the four shepherds panted up the slight incline to report their loss of two men killed. We had seen one man die; the first had fallen a mile in front. It was his own fault, they declared; he had risen on an elbow above a boulder, in order to take aim.

With the retirement of the askares we had several minutes' grace, which the more experienced chetniks took advantage of, to arrange themselves comfortably for the duel they knew would follow.

Spare cartridge-clips were placed handily, where they could be grabbed in a second, when rapidity of firing would be essential, and the cautious strengthened their fortifications. One canny fellow placed a heavy log over his head, at a slant, one end resting on a boulder, the other on the ground. Later, when the shrapnel began to fall, some of us looked enviously at him.

As I have said, the trees that lined the opposite side of the valley were rather beyond accurate range. Still, by elevating the sights, a good marksman could drop bullets among them with a chance of effect. A steady hum of speculation as to the distance ran along the line, and sights were raised and lowered at frequent intervals. Most of the men were nervous—there was no denying that. But here and there, a veteran, absolutely cool and indifferent, joked his excited neighbours. Then they resolutely joked back.

Out of the trees across the valley broke a thin line of skirmishers moving at a double-quick. Steel glinted above the red fezes, and the men under them leaped boulders and tree-trunks as lightly as though they had not been marching for hours. Mileff let them come on. He was crouching in his pit, next to mine, a cigarette in his mouth, watching them keenly through his

binoculars. His whistle lay beside him, ready for instant use. But he kept silence. We soon saw why. The Turks came on quite carelessly.

The voivode let them get within easy range before he blew two whistles, the signal for the middle section, alone, to fire. Apparently, the askares did not hear the whistle, or did not know what it was, for they kept on. They did not even stop to fire back, when our rifles spoke, just as one of them was sticking a bayonet into the corpse of the shepherd. An askare pitched head forward and his friends kept on. When they were within a quarter of a mile, the firing of the middle section became general. Back and forth pealed the echoes, from the mountain walls on either hand. Several askares dropped. The rest bunched together and fired a few rounds at us wildly but they could not stand the punishment. They were dropping at every volley. When half of them were down, they turned and fled precipitately. Mileff let them go, unmolested.

One of the pictorial advantages of a modern battle is the lack of smoke. Despite the hot firing, our view was entirely unrestricted. We could see the fleeing skirmishers, and the dead and wounded men scattered over the valley—and, beyond the retreating enemy, their goal, the



AN INSURGENT (KORTSER) OUTPOST IN ACTION.

pine-trees. We watched them contentedly, as men who have done a good job and are a trifle more proud of it than they care to admit. Perhaps we forgot that the fight had only begun; at any rate, we gasped when out of those same mysterious pine-trees burst a succession of little groups of men, who rapidly formed into four separate clumps. A couple of men on horse-back galloped from one to the others, and we heard far-off cheering.

The separate clumps started toward us at a smart pace. They could not know our exact position but that did n't bother them any. At first, they moved at a walk; gradually, this changed to a trot. For the effect, Mileff had a handful of sharpshooters open up on them almost as soon as they started. For a fraction of a minute, their ranks staggered under the lash; then the clumps marched on. Half-way from the pine-trees they changed their formation, shifting from column of masses into extended order—two swaying lines of men, that stretched clear across the widest part of the valley.

“They do it well—the dogs,” muttered Mileff, between his teeth. “That is the work of the German drill-masters.”

Faintly, we had heard them cheering when

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they started. Now they set up a shrill staccato yelling, that struck us in ferocious waves of sound. "Allah-Allah-il-il-Allah," they yelled. They kept on yelling it. Occasionally, in the bedlam of noises, we could make out the word "din, din, din," repeated over and over again. It means kill. Their officers had leaped to the front, and were leading them with swords drawn. A quiet grin settled on Mileff's face, and he raised the whistle to his lips. He blew one long quavering note.

All across the valley, from wall to wall, the volleys crashed. The chetniks were firing as fast as they could pull their triggers. I heard men beside me praying fervently to the Virgin, to Christ, that their levers might not stick as they pulled them to eject the spent shells. They prayed out loud, and a man down the line cursed through tears when his breech-block refused to work. Crying with rage, he hurled his rifle to the ground, and snatching his revolver, steadied it on the rock before him, while he fired shot after shot into the Turks, below.

The askares had stopped, motionless, as if they had come to an actual wall, barring their way. It is not an easy thing to press on in the face of sixty resolute men, armed with rifles that fire as

fast as one can pull the trigger. All they saw was a succession of jets like steam. Often they did n't see those. Their officers shouted to them to march on, beat them with their sabres, pleaded with them. They were so near, we could hear them, plainly. But it was no use; they turned and fled, and the rain of bullets fell on them from three sides as they ran, pelting through their panic-stricken ranks, spitting on the rocks about their feet, knocking off their fezes, and boring their heads. They ran like men possessed.

Some of the more exuberant chetniks leaped the wall in front of them, and started after their fleeing enemies, but Mileff resolutely ordered them to return. However, when the Turks had reached a safe distance, he did permit a few to go out and finish such of the wounded as they could get at. Having done so much, we waited, still complacent. It was but a little past noon, and we had all the rest of the day before us.

When the askars reached the shelter of the opposite side of the valley they halted. By means of glasses, one could make out the soldiers throwing themselves down on the ground like tired dogs. Officers talked together and orderlies cantered about. One pointed to the woods, urgently, and rode off, forthwith. A bit later,

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Mileff, who never took his eye off their movements, exclaimed, and looking, I saw a string of pack-ponies emerging from the trees. They looked harmless enough. A shadow veiled Mileff's cheerful grin.

"It is the mountain gun," he said. "I had hoped they could not get it over the passes. Now we shall lose some men, Smeet."

A squad of artillerymen accompanied the ponies, and they set to work assembling the several pieces of the weapon. Soon, they had a mountain gun, of small calibre, mounted on a slight elevation of land. Evidently the Turks were going to let the gun do the arguing, for a while. Where they had expected, at most, to be opposed by a handful of village militiamen, they had encountered a large cheta, with fortifications they did not know the strength of. Being cautious, they were not going to take any more big chances. It was, by the way, a curious example of the style of warfare, that no communications were exchanged by the hostile bodies. There were no cartels, no summonses to surrender. Neither trusted the other sufficiently.

The lassitude which had affected the askares wore off finally, and a knot gathered around the mountain-gun, watching the preparations of the

artillerymen. It must not be supposed that absolute silence continued. Sporadic shots were fired by both sides. Several Turks dropped, and one of our men crawled to the rear with a broken arm. The knot about the gun split apart. Crash, crash, crash! The echoes rolled the length and breadth of the valley. All the firing which had preceded seemed like children's sport, compared to this racket. And it continued without intermission, the artillerymen serving the piece in record time. A line of men carrying ammunition trotted to it from the pine-trees, and then returned for more.

Possibly for a minute I wondered what it all meant, and what on earth they were firing for. It did not seem possible it could be us. Then I happened to look up. A fleecy white puff-ball was between me and the sun, travelling toward us. It burst, emitting a cloud of dingy yellow smoke, and a rain of delicate silver hail sparkled for the barest instant in the sun-rays, then dropped on the rocks of the rifle-pits with a strange thudding smack. It was a vicious noise, and calculated to make one nervous. It was even more vicious when it struck men's flesh.

This continued for what seemed a very long time. There was no escape from one of those

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shrapnel shells, if it was timed right. They burst directly overhead, and the tiny bullets with which they were filled fell in a hail behind the rifle-pits. Fortunately the Turks were not over-good marksmen. They did n't have enough target practice. Having given us a sample of their shrapnel, at a cost to us of two men, they made a couple of more or less successful attempts to blow the top off the rough breastwork we had built across the valley. Explosive shells did tear things up in several spots, but it was the shrapnel we minded most. It was so dreadfully certain.

After ten minutes of it, Mileff gave the signal to retreat—three short whistles. The askares were already advancing, under cover of their artillery, and when they saw the chetniks scurrying from their holes they set up a mighty yelling and pursued us hot-foot. It was great sport for them without doubt. We doubled a turn in the pass, leaving a picket at the bend to hold them back if they pressed us too hard, and took shelter behind the next barricade.

So the afternoon wore on. It was n't a pleasant afternoon's work. Very shortly the romance of it wore off entirely, and it became sheer hard toiling. We sweated and swore, and some of us bled, and now and then one died. It became so,

in time, that I took grim satisfaction every time I saw an askare pitch forward, in that funny way men do when they are drilled by high-power bullets. If they don't pitch forward, they fall backward in the same way, or whirl around and drop in a heap. At first it makes you nauseated. Afterward you get used to it, and if a man is an enemy it makes you feel really happy.

At the second barrier, the askares had rather a knottier problem to solve, although it did not cost them so many men. They had learned the wisdom of caution, and they made the best use of it they could. But they were crippled, inasmuch as the winding narrow pass made their mountain-gun less effective. Instead of charging openly, in the magnificent style they showed in the first assault, they crept up, according to modern scientific military principles (another trick learned from the German drill-masters), in short rushes, one platoon covering its mate.

It was the middle of the afternoon when we abandoned the second barrier, but we had lost a dozen men, and we were well-nigh exhausted. The Turks were even worse off, for the bulk of the physical labour had been on their part. At the third barrier we had a rest of an hour, while they lugged the mountain-gun into a new position,

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up the pass, on a shelf of the cliff, from which it could command the summit. They were preparing for the last rush.

At the third barrier we gave them a corking fight. The orders were to hold it to the last minute, and as a matter of fact the chetniks got out of hand, staying behind the rocks and logs until the first of the askares got over. In a trice the fighting was hand-to-hand. Bayonet clashed with bayonet, and even with the advantage of the longer-barrelled Mauser the askares were hurled back. It was terribly fierce fighting for a bit though—fiercer than one really cares for. A man may be able to enjoy the spectacular side of a battle, at long range, fought with firearms, but when the cold steel is used, and men are at hand-grips to see which shall plunge a bayonet in the other's body, it is somewhat too bloody to be pretty.

Andrea closed with a gigantic lieutenant who came over the barrier in a single splendid leap, sword in one hand, revolver clutched in the other. While they were fencing for an opening for sabre or bayonet, Mileff shot the askare. Handsome Peter, his beautiful hair flying in the breeze, crossed bayonets with an agile Syrian. It was a case of pure skill, and the chetnik won. In-

dividual combats were going on all around me. Mileff, himself, accounted for a captain who led the askare charge, and pistoled a private. About this time the mountain-gun commenced bellowing again, and we retreated as soon as we had cleared the barrier of live askares.

It must not be thought that all this was done without cost to the cheta. We paid for it—we paid for everything we did—and we paid a bitter price. Whether it was an ironical whimsey of fate, or whether it was simply a tribute to greater skill, I do not know, but the fatalities on our side were mostly among the militiamen. A couple of chetniks I did not know, were dropped; but none of our immediate party was badly hurt.

As we emerged at the summit of the pass, the sun was just beginning to sink behind the hills. His lower rim, blood-red, had touched the peaks, and the shining orange ball had tinged all the clouds that banked the sky a medley of glorious hues, from blood-red to old-gold and violet. Beneath us, the rocks dripped with blood. The grass was slippery with it. I have a horrid recollection of slipping to my knees, and finding I had stepped on a dead man. It was all red, the whole landscape—all red. And there was no hope

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in it. It was red—like blood and death. The mountain-gun, on its distant shelf of rock, barked threateningly, and more of those fleecy smoke-balls drifted toward us. They, too, turned red under the sun's rays. Only when they burst they became a sickly yellow, unhealthy and miasmatic. The gun barked continuously, as if anxious to do as much harm as it could before night fell and blotted out its effectiveness.

I think the askares must have been as tired as we were, for they did not pursue us at once. They threw forward advanced pickets, who exchanged shots with our sentries, but that was all. For the time being there was peace. We thought we could rest, but Mileff would not have it so. He gave the weary men ten minutes *pocheefka* beneath the pines, whose branches soughed a requiem; and then he ordered them to collect firewood. For an hour after sunset they worked, carrying back-breaking loads and stacking fires.

When dusk had changed to darkness, the fires were lighted, outlining the crest of the pass in flames, against which tossed the mighty shadows of six pine-trees, for one had been up-rooted by a shell, and never again could the defile be called the Pass of the Seven Pines. Reflections of other fires, down the pass, glowed against the rocks and

sky, showing where the askares bivouacked, and sometimes the sound of their voices reached us, penetrated by the shrill howling of their sentinels, which we had come to know so well on our clandestine journeys through the raon.

We of the Mileff cheta mustered in the rear of the fires, all save the sentinels, and listened to the voivode. I wish I knew what he said. It must have been unpolished and rough, because of the man's nature, but I am just as sure it was powerful and to the point—if proof was needed, the ardent cheers of the chetniks were enough. In truth, we were a sorry array. Scarcely forty men were mustered in the line, and not one was without bruise or cut or bullet-hole. Some limped, some had arms in slings, some had bandaged heads. The missing ones were in the pass. They were not wounded. There was no chance of that. Had the askares, by accident, passed a wounded man in their first mad haste, he would have killed himself, rather than submit to the certain torture in store for him.

Our plans were not elaborate. All we wanted was to get away quickly, and to get away unobserved. Two shepherds, Ivan Matkioff and his son Stephen, volunteered to stay and tend the fires, and fling a shot at intervals into the

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askare camp. Before morning they would steal away also. The villagers had a good start, and anyway, it would not be safe to wait longer. Next day the askares would find some roundabout way, and flank us. So we filed off, quietly, by a side-track through the mountains, heading for Kovatchavishta.

We marched all night. At various points detachments left us, and by dawn we were not more than twenty strong—I should say, weak. We hid that day in the mountains, and the next night we reached Kovatchavishta, to which the news of our fight had gone before us already. They were very good to us in Kovatchavishta—they bathed us and dressed our wounds and gave us food. And we slept a long time.

But the fate of Bukovo I never heard, because of what transpired next.

CHAPTER XIX

A WONDERFUL WOMAN

NATURALLY, the news of the fighting at the Pass of the Seven Pines passed by mysterious channels of communication to every corner of the raon. The askares were furious; we did not have to be told that. They had lost a hundred men or more, and after paying this awful price, they found an empty village to vent their rage upon. Under the circumstances, Mileff decided that this particular neighbourhood was unhealthy for him and for all other chetniks. Within the course of a few days, patrols would visit the different villages, in search of evidence of participators in the fight, and a hidden cheta would certainly be discovered.

So that night it was settled, the comita (band) would march southward, dropping wounded men at such villages as they could be left in conveniently. Kovatchavishta was not judged safe for hospital uses. This was sad news to me, for it meant the severing of all connections

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with the men who had been my comrades during the weeks of marching and fighting in the hills and valleys of Navarrokop. I could not accompany them to the south. For the next month or two there would be no fighting, and every additional man meant so much more danger of detection. I must leave them; we all recognised that fact, and I think we were all sorry. I know I was confoundedly gloomy at the idea of bidding good-bye to the voivode, and Andrea, Kortser, Ilia, and the Peters—I don't remember just how many Peters there were. We always had Handsome Peter and Big Peter with us, and frequently others.

The arrangements were soon made. Nicola the Courier was waiting, as it chanced, for the arrival of a small cheta from Drama, carrying dispatches to Sofia, before setting out on his next trip across the frontier, and I could accompany him then. There was nothing to do, except say good-bye. We sat around the house all day, trying to make believe we were enjoying ourselves. Fortunately, time did n't have an opportunity to hang heavy on our hands; the tidings of our exploit had made us famous in the village, and a large section of Kovatchavishta came to visit us. It was truly comic. There were always some



HANDSOME PETER AND ILIA.
Taken at Kovatchavishta.

old women and children peeking at the door, and a row of aged peasants sat against the wall, retailing exploits of their own youth in mechanically monotonous voices.

Kovatchavishta's grape crop had just been harvested, and fresh sweet wine was circulating like milk. We got more than our share of it. Man after man came in, with his individual pail, and Mileff had to issue a decree against further indulgence, not because he feared intoxication from such harmless stuff, but because indigestion is a terrible affliction to men with a night of marching staring them in the face. But after dinner, as we were all tightening our belts and shifting our weapons,—I, out of habit, for I knew I had not more than a city block to march,—our host brought in a last tribute, and the voivode assented.

Tin cups in hand, brimming full of the ruby juice, we stood in a circle, as D'Artagnan and his friends stood when they took their famous pledge, twenty loyal comrades-in-arms, who had fought shoulder to shoulder, sharing the protection of the same rock, and between whom there was no guile. They drank a health to me, and I drank a health to them; then we drank a health to the fights we had fought, and to Mileff, with his hand on my shoulder. And, at the last, we drank a

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health to Makedonia, that shadow-land which exists in dreams.

It was the same, I felt, exactly the same as it had been on the many nights gone by. In the street, it was the same. I stumbled over a bumptious cobble stone, and Giorgi, behind me, laughed his fat, chuckling giggle of amusement. The night was pitch black, and the houses were visible as darker patches in the night. The rushing roar of the near by river, a stifled breathing around me, were the sole noises that came out of the darkness. At a corner we paused; Mileff spoke a last word to Nicola, and grasped me by the hand.

"Os bogu, Smeet," he said. The rest filed by me, one by one, each with a hand-clasp, and a muttered "Os bogu." A couple thrust little trinkets in my pocket. They disappeared in the night, swallowed up utterly. They might not have been, but for a stray stone slipping under a sandaled foot. I never saw or heard of them again. I do not know where they are, or what became of them. I have wondered, whether, if they were alive when the Constitution was wrung from Abdul Hamid, they laid down their Männlichers and accepted peace. But I do not know. They were swallowed up in the night.

For the next three days, Nicola and I lived in the house of his brother. It was a dull sort of life, after the constant excitement and change of the cheta, but I had to make the best of it. Nicola was a fine fellow, big, strong, honest, and generous. Still, he did not know a word of any languages save Bulgarian and Turkish, and his conception of making a stranger understand his own language was to shout at him as loud as he could.

Nicola's brother was a typical hard-working peasant—he rose at daybreak and hastened to his work, as a mason—but the mainspring of the family was his wife. She nursed the baby, slapped the children, and tended to the house, and the pigs and hens, who shared the court-yard with an antique donkey; and in all these labours she was adequately assisted by her daughter, Linko, a tiny miss of twelve, the most capable, for her years, I have ever seen. Linko thought nothing of starting, in the morning, if her mother was away, and doing the housework, cooking the meals, etc., and carrying the heavy baby on her back, all the time. Of the small boy, his uncle's namesake, called, affectionately, 'Cola, the least said the better. He had been carefully brought up according to the Eastern system, which seems

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to prevail among all races in Macedonia, and which dictates that girls are beasts of burden, while a man-child is to be spoiled and petted and suffered to commit any evil, rather than be rebuked. The remaining member of the family, who came in at meal-times, and at stated intervals throughout the day for a drink of mastica, was the father-in-law of Nicola's brother, an old man with wispy grey whiskers, who looked as though the moths had been ravaging him.

For a day or two, I made the mistake of thinking the mother a mere servant-of-all-work for her husband, barren of individuality or ability to appreciate anything, beyond the necessity of food several times a day. Then, one evening, in the great room in which we all slept, I saw her with her baby, when she thought she was alone. She tickled his chubby limbs, and pinched them to see the blood blush the velvet skin; she patted his cheek, and talked to him in the same foolishly loving language a Western mother uses. When she saw me watching her, she was not ashamed. A proud smile swept her stern visage, obliterating the harsh lines creased by care, and she held him toward me appealingly.

On the evening of the third day, quite late, we moved, guided by the old peasant with the wispy

whiskers, to a second house. Nicola had indicated to me, by the few Bulgarian words I knew, and signs, that I would find something to surprise me there, but the surprise was far greater than I could have imagined. Climbing the steep ladder to the second or living floor, in darkness, we emerged on the customary gallery, likewise dark. A shaft of light fell from a half-opened door, and with it, came a voice unlike any I had heard in Macedonia, using the tones of a woman of culture.

For a moment, as we stepped through the doorway, the bulk of Nicola's big figure overshadowing the room, and blinded by the flickering oil-lamps, I could make out nothing distinctly. Then I saw a woman, standing by the primitive mantelpiece, and staring with polite curiosity at me. She wore a long black skirt of rough texture, that had evidently outlasted much hard usage,—the kind of skirt the women of London and Paris and New York wear. It was not short, it was guiltless of gaudy stripes, and she wore a plain black blouse, instead of the brocade bodice of the peasant woman. She could not have been more than twenty-five, if that, and although privation and toil had seared little lines in her face, and about her deep-set eyes, she was quite pretty.

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"*Bon soir, Monsieur Smeet,*" she said, smiling, frankly, with one hand extended.

It was not her knowledge of my name that surprised me. Americans did not march with the chetas every campaign of the revolution. But that she should speak French, and with such a pure accent! My heart went up into my throat at a leap, and I wondered, with an ecstasy that was painful, whether, possibly, she was acquainted with English—which I had not heard since I entered Macedonia. But no. To that extent I was disappointed. Yet her fluent French was a great relief after Nicola's kindly bellowings.

"Are you a missionary?" I asked her. For I thought it likely, from her appearance, that she was one of the unselfish souls who devoted their lives to spreading the gospel through the unhappy country. She smiled, showing rows of white teeth.

"I am Tzveta Bojova," she said simply. Then I knew. You who have read of Joan of Arc, and, smiling over the story, dismissed it as a beautiful legend, a fable to inspirit men, have never heard of Tzveta Bojova, who was known as "Madame" to the peasants and chetniks of a vast sweep of wild country in north-eastern Macedonia.

Tzveta Bojova! It does n't sound especially heroic. It might be anyone's name.

She was born in a little village, near the town of Seres, and her family must have been fairly well-to-do, for they could afford to send her to Sofia to be educated. She studied medicine at the University of Sofia, and when she was graduated, she married a man of her village, who was the school-teacher. Several months afterward, the askares descended on the village and burned her father's and her husband's houses, killing them both, together with two of her brothers, and some of the women and children. Why? Because they were suspected of spreading the revolutionary propaganda. Two other of Madame Bojova's brothers helped her to escape, and, travelling night and day by the hidden chetnik trails, succeeded in getting her across the frontier to safety.

But she refused to stay in Bulgaria, where she was safe. She was not the kind of woman to waste time in idle weeping, over the loss of her kin, and she made up her mind, automatically, as it were, to dedicate the rest of her life to avenging their deaths. And, withal, mind you, she was practical about it. She did not indulge in any hysterical dreams. She knew that a woman

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would not be of as much use as a fighter as she could be in a more feminine capacity. That was the way she argued it out. The more use she could be to her Bulgar friends, the more damage she would be doing to the Turks. It is true, women have been known to march with the fighting chetas, but such were not really women. They were weird, unsexed creatures, driven nearly mad by suffering. Madame Bojova was not that kind.

So she offered her services to the Committee in Sofia, as a nurse and doctor. If there is anything Macedonia needs more than aught else, it is adequate medical facilities. Particularly was this true during the revolution. Besides the wounded chetniks, secreted wherever they might escape observation, in the thatch of roofs, behind stinking mangers in barns, or in holes in the rocks, there were peasants, dying, simply because they lacked a few words of advice. Of course, it was no more than to be expected that the primary principles of sanitation were unknown.

Her offer was readily accepted, and when I met her she had been three years at the work. Her sex never made things easier for her. In fact, the physical frailties correlative to it were

an added burden. But she was never known to give in. Fear she positively did not know. Travelling, as she did, on foot, usually at night, when speed was a necessity, skirts became impossible. She realised this before she undertook her first trip, and adopted the regular chetnik uniform, knickerbockers and all. Being feminine to the core, though, she carried in her scanty pack a single dress, to wear in houses or when not actually marching.

It has always seemed strange to me, that the terribly wearing life she had lived for three years, had not told more on her appearance. She was still young and pretty. Her hair was a russet-brown colour that caught the lights and shifted to a bronze hue. Her face was very pleasant, with broad, strongly-marked features, and her smile, which came often, was always heartening. She could smile sometimes when men could not. I have never met a man or woman who was her equal in pluck. There was a quality about her, indefinable in nature, that made her striking, even in that untidy room, dressed as she was, in garments ill-fitting, ragged, and not overclean.

This was the woman, whose name was never mentioned without a blessing in that wide district, who sat across the fireplace from me, in

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Kovatchavishta. Nicola, she had greeted by name, and he had bowed low over her hand, with a ponderous grace I had not dreamed him to possess.

But I have forgotten, in drawing this sketch of Madame herself, to describe her following, in their own way no less curious. They were three in number, great, stalwart, strapping, young fellows, all undergraduates of the University of Sofia. They were not regular chetniks, and they were disguised as mountaineers, to give them greater safety in their perambulations. The skin-tight white trousers, fluted white petticoats, and sleeveless brocaded jackets that made up their costume gave them a mirth-provoking resemblance to a comic-opera chorus. They were fine fellows, for all that, and perfectly devoted to Madame Bojova.

We sat late into the night, about the wood-fire, exchanging experiences. Madame Bojova and her escort were on their way to Bulgaria, as we were, going home for a rest, after six months' service in the field. She had been devoting the past couple of days to examining the various wounded men in the villages that had helped in the fight above Bukovo. As soon as the third party of chetniks from Drama arrived,



THE INCIDENTS OF A HALT.

A drink at a mountain spring and a "doctor" bandaging a sore foot.

she informed me, Nicola would start for Bulgaria.

I asked Madame how she withstood the hardships of the life. She smiled, deprecatingly; and I insisted that the constant tramping over rocky trails and climbing of precipitous mountains was hard on me. At this she smiled. "*Mais je, aussi,*" she admitted merrily. "No, it is not easy, always, Monsieur Smeet. But what would you? The work is to be done. Someone must do it. And I can do it better than others. Have I not done it for three years? And I am still here."

"But the Turks," I said. "How do you keep out of their hands?"

"Ah, the Turks," she said, laughing, gayer than ever. "Bad men! They would catch me and kill me, if they could. They chase me, always. When they approach a village, heidi, I take to the mountains, to le Balkan. Then I hide and the askares go away."

"But if they should catch you?" I knew the askares' ways with women. A shadow crossed her face, and her lips tightened.

"This." One hand touched her hip, where nestled the butt of a revolver, perhaps half the size of the big French Nagonts, carried by the chetniks, but just as deadly. "*Aussi—*" she

drew a phial from an inside pocket, and shook it gently in the light of the lamp. We said nothing, gazing into the fire for five minutes. With her merry laugh and a flashing of white teeth she threw off the despondency, and turned to me again.

"Have you a cigarette, Monsieur Smeet?"

Having been equipped with pouch and paper, she sat cross-legged in the firelight, and rolled herself a very passable cigarette, which she smoked with considerable gusto, before saying "*dobra vicha*" ("good-night"), and rolling up in her cloak between two of her escort. The fact that she was sleeping in the same room with five men did not seem to bother her in the least.

As the remaining members of the party that Nicola was to guide across the frontier were expected the following night, we put in the day getting ready for the long march ahead of us. Madame's friends procured a goat, which they skinned, cut up, and cooked, to an accompaniment of dreadful smells, Macedonian goats, as I have had occasion to remark, being very gamey animals. The taste of the meat, in this instance, made no difference to me, however, for a diet of baked beans and fried onions, varied with a little hard bread, and extending over a period of a week, had

proved too much for my digestion. Principally, I lived on air, with a few crumbs of klepb and sireeny (cheese), vilely salty.

Madame had some Russian plays with her, and found an ancient copy of Victor Hugo's *Toilers of the Sea*, which Mileff had left during a previous stay. With these, and a bit of sewing, which she produced from her knapsack, she contrived to pass the time, giving an occasional direction to the cooks who were preparing the goat. From time to time, she made us Turkish coffee, in a pot set amongst the embers of the fire, and at dinner-time, when there were three different dishes, she captured the spoons after each course and washed them, an entertaining novelty to chetniks like Nicola and myself. Her three retainers had become used to such semi-civilised ways, and submitted to them meekly, albeit with sheepish grins.

To a man who had almost forgotten what civilisation meant, and who would have been prone, like his companions, to stare in dull amaze at a frock-coat, it was like an essence from the blue, to have coffee in the afternoon at five o'clock, served by a woman who knew Tolstoi, Gorki, Bebel, Carl Marx and the leaders of Socialism, from A to Z, to whom Shakespeare was

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more than a name, and who had ideas on the drama and modern society, revolutionary, but interesting.

She asked me, by the way, concerning Miss Stone. Of her own free will, she was undergoing the hardships that Miss Stone had been compelled to suffer, and her point of view on the affair was undoubtedly interesting. It took some questioning to bring it out.

"She was a good woman—Miss Stone," she said, at last, somewhat abruptly. "I am sure she was a good woman, because I know Madame Tsilka, who was with her, in captivity, while the chetniks held her. But she made much of a small thing. She could not see that the men who were holding her were patriots—not brigands. She was too good and religious, or something, to see that. She could not see that they had a cause, and that she suffered for a cause. Yes, Miss Stone suffered—she was not a woman of strong will—but she has been repaid. Although they know she was not a willing prisoner, our people pray for her, as a martyr, for what she has done for them—for the money, the medicines, the rifles, the bullets, that her ransom bought. She is a martyr, and she does not realise it—not in the right way."

That was all she would say. Her view, I may remark, expresses that of every other Macedonian of influence with whom I have talked on the subject.

CHAPTER XX

HEIDI!

AFTER each skirmish or tedious march, I would console myself with the reflection: "Well, this is the worst possible. Now, we 'll start on the down grade." And, regularly, within the course of the next day or two, something more taxing would turn up, to mock at me. It seemed inevitable. Whenever we thought the fates had done their worst, those three gibbering old hags calmly introduced us to some new sensations. Perhaps it was their cynical humour that dictated the last adventure of all, in some respects, the most strenuous experience of that brief excursion into medieval Macedonia.

As I have said, the remaining members of the cheta Nicola was to guide across the frontier, were due that night. As soon as they came, we were to shoulder our packs, and set out on the first stage of the tramp to Logina. The distance to Logina, from Kovatchavishta, was about sixty miles as the crow flies, but, of course, the moun-

tains, and the absence of anything better than a sheep-track, the major portion of the way, made it a really longer journey. Besides the natural difficulties, in a march of this character, the chetniks were often compelled to make detours of miles around Turkish posts and villages.

Immediately after supper, we all rolled up in our cloaks, so that we might start the march refreshed. About midnight, we were roused by a pounding on the gate of the court-yard, and investigation showed a little knot of men and animals, huddled in the shadow cast by the high stone-wall. In a minute or two, they were surrounded by a squad of the village militia, who had run out into the streets at the noise.

The strangers were the chetniks from Drama raon—five men and a wall-eyed boy, with two horses they had taken from an askare detachment. The Drama chetniks were a trifle winded, for they had been tramping since eight o'clock, and had been on the march for three days, steadily, pushing towards the frontier. So they were called up-stairs, and sat around the fire with us, exchanging the usual reminiscences. Each one, as he entered, made a low obeisance to Madame.

For an hour we talked, militiamen coming in and out of the room, constantly, with other

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villagers awakened by the disturbance that animated quiet Kovatchavishta. Then Nicola, who ranked as chief of the small cheta, leaped lightly to his feet. "Heidi!" he said, tersely. There was a scramble for knapsacks, a second or two spent in adjusting buckles, and we were ready. I noted, as I stooped to fix my sandal strap, that the sole was almost worn through. Would it last out the march? I shuddered, when I thought of the sharp rocks at the bottom of dark ravines. Their points cut through the tough cow-hide like bayonets.

When Madame stood up, I saw her, for the first time, in her chetnik uniform. She was clothed just as we were, in a light-brown suit, faded by rain and weather. Her knickerbockers were met at the knee by thick golf stockings, and she had thrown a hooded waterproof cloak, around her shoulders. There was something uncanny about her; she was so small and tiny. Where had I seen her before? I knew I had seen her. Where could it have been? Then, like a flash I knew. She was the living image of Miss Maude Adams as Peter Pan. Peter Pan, sallying forth to steal through the lines of cruel askares, waiting for a chance to cut his throat! How he would have enjoyed it! At least, I think he

would. He was a boy, and he did not want to grow up.

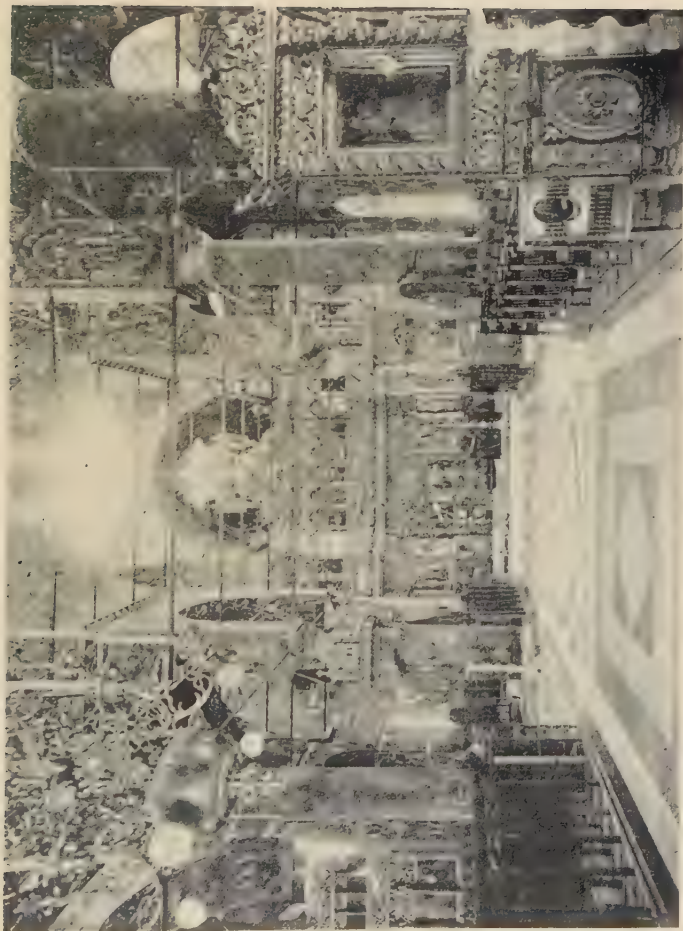
In the court-yard, we stood watching the heavier packs being shifted to the ponies' backs. Madame absolutely refused to part with hers. At the last moment, a militiaman stepped forward and picked up a hoof. He exclaimed something, and the chetniks crowded closer. The hoofs of both horses were carefully inspected, and a man was sent on the run for Gurgeff the Blacksmith. The shoes were too worn to stand the difficult mountain-climbing that the beasts would have to do.

But Gurgeff was a skilful smith, and inside of half an hour he had the job finished neatly. We shook hands all around, and the procession of ten men, a woman, a boy, and two horses, filed out into the street. The crescent moon, in its last quarter, was beginning to climb the sky, lighting the track that wound up a spur of the mountain behind Kovatchavishta, and showing us most of the treacherous stones and holes that made such tasks difficult on black nights.

So we made good progress, and Kovatchavishta rapidly melted away beneath us, until it became a mere blur of lights in the vast caldron of the valley. As I watched, many of the lights

flickered out, and a tinkling melody fluttered up like a bird's call, from the shallow stream which tumbles by the clump of houses. A lump rose in my throat, I'll admit. I was not exactly sorry to leave Kovatchavishta. It was scarcely civilised; it was decidedly uncomfortable. I know those houses must have been cold in winter, despite the stacks of firewood to be had for the cutting in the mountains. But, with all that, Kovatchavishta was a community of warm-hearted people, who had been good to a stranger in their midst, according to their lights, doing their best for his comfort and entertainment. I have often hoped that the askares would pass by Kovatchavishta.

Up and up, we climbed, higher and higher. There was the customary disability of the mountains to start going down again, and when we did reach the summit, and had started the descent on the opposite side, we could hardly realise it. A considerable part of the time we were in a ravine, buried deep in the forest, which shut out even the brilliant moonlight. Streams presented themselves to be forded, and once we had a ticklish job, in the shape of some rapids above a waterfall. A slip into the boiling waters would have been an ugly accident. But we all got over in safety.



THE CHURCH OF RIL0 MONASTERY.

Perhaps the best existing example of the barbarous magnificence of the early style of
Bulgarian ecclesiastical architecture.

Madame Bojova was enjoying the march as much as anybody, apparently. She was always near the head of the procession, and never grumbled. In fact, she was constantly cracking jokes, or laughing at some one else's remarks. So deep down in the earth were we, that we could not see the dawn coming until it was nearly at hand. At five o'clock, we halted for a breathing spell, beside the stream which meandered through the ravine.

Inactive there, in the chilly gloom of the early morning, we appreciated, for the first time, the rawness of the November air. I noted, with surprise, that an ice-scum had formed on the surface of the river-pools, and a keen wind blew down the ravine, groaning among the tree-branches, and whistling through the crevices in the rocks. There was a concerted dash for the ponies, and our long cloaks. I went in search of mine, and found Madame tugging at a stubborn buckle, which refused to release her garment. Instead of exclaiming, and asking for help, she bent quickly and picked up mine, which she had already disengaged. And she was somewhat indignant at an offer of assistance.

After ten minutes of shivering rest, we resumed the march, striking off at a tangent, up a side gully, that took us onto a broad sweep of moor-

land. Here the marching was comparatively easy, and the grey light of the dawning aided us in seeing our way. The sun was barely tingeing the eastern horizon, with its advance-guard of crimson shafts, when we leaped a bog-bordered brook and trotted up a valley, walled in by rows of stately pine-trees that made it as secluded as a roofless cathedral. This was the first bivouac.

Although the sun was climbing higher, with every minute, it did not seem to make the air warmer, and under Madame's superintendence, the chetniks scattered in a search for firewood. The heavy rains, which had marked the past week, had soaked most of the available supply, but Madame did not permit such trivial things to daunt her. She was an artist at kindling a fire in the open. There was no mistake about it. If it be true, that the real test of being a forester is ability to make a good fire, then she certainly deserved the title. In a jiffy, she had a roaring blaze kindled, around which we could all crouch to warm our blue hands, and thaw out stiffened joints.

Later, she produced a little coffee-pot, and made us Turkish coffee, and dosed one of the strange chetniks, who was suffering from a bad attack of

chills. She was all over, helping everybody, never thinking of herself. When she saw I could not eat the strong goat's flesh (for the diet of baked beans and fried onions I had been subjected to, in Kovatchavishta, still influenced my digestion), she rummaged until she found some apples in one of the spare packs. Then, with Nicola, she made a rapid tour of the valley, to make sure there were no approaches to it we could not watch from our camp; she knew the science of the chetnik warfare, the science which demands that you have all the chances and the enemy none.

The sun came out vividly, as the morning waned, but he could not draw from the air the sharp bite of early winter. Away from the bonfire, you had to exercise continually to keep warm, and attempts at sleep invariably resulted in one's waking up, feeling frozen on the side away from the flames. Bob, as I dubbed the wall-eyed small boy, because his Bulgarian name was unpronounceable, and a long-haired chetnik, with an Irish face, had an exciting time racing the ponies around the tumbled terrain of the valley until Zankoff, chief of the Drama chetniks, who was Bob's big brother, peremptorily ordered them to quit.

Poor Bob! All his relatives, except the one

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brother with him, had died or been killed, and he was going to Bulgaria to tussle for an education before striking out for himself in the world. He was a hardy, wiry youngster, able to stand the life as, very likely, few American lads of his age could have stood it, but I could n't help feeling sorry for him. He knew too much. You may say what you please, but it is not good for sixteen-year-old boys to be brought up in an atmosphere of plotting and intrigue, to have become used to talk of death and murder, to have even become used to the sight of such things. It is not right; it makes little old men out of them, who try to reason out the philosophy of what they see, and fail miserably.

At noon, we had a frugal lunch, for the food supply was limited, and marched on. The country we had to traverse was unsettled, so we could run the risk of crossing the hills in daylight. Our objective was Granitza, the Bulgarian-Turkish frontier village, which sprawls, half on one side of the line, half on the other. By circling the Turkish half of the village, and crossing the frontier at a lonely spot, judiciously picking a gap between the askare sentries, we could reach Bulgaria, and come down on the village from the rear.

There were ample signs that we were wise to

have started for Logina when we did; in a short space of time the mountains would have been well-nigh impassable. The rains, which herald the coming of winter, had filled many of the trails with mud, and had the snow been on time, we should have had the pleasure of wading through the drifts that quickly block the Rhodope passes. We were lucky as it was, in having nothing but the cold to encounter.

We were all light-hearted, as we swung along, singing the chetnik songs, and thinking of the warm welcome we would surely get from the friends who would receive us at Granitza. The chetniks, thought, too, of the pleasure they would have in strolling down to the Bulgarian guard-house, the next morning, and twitting the askares who mounted guard across the bridge. Giorgi, the long-haired chetnik, of whom I have spoken wore a faded red fez, with a bullet hole through it, which he had picked up on a fatal field. This, he indicated, with a broad grin, he intended to bring to the notice of the askares at Granitza.

Right at the start, we climbed a mountain. It was hot work, but we were rewarded by the magnificent view. They pointed out to me a monolithic pile of rock on the summit, where a small cheta of Bulgars had met their death,

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standing off an overwhelming force of askares. Surrounded on every side, the insurgents had retired up the mountain, and finally had scaled this rock, in the centre of which was a hollow, deep enough to contain a few men. Here, they had fought and died, to the last man. The chetniks muttered prayers and crossed themselves, as they trotted over the mighty shadow thrown by the rock, sitting there serene and calm, for all the bloody happenings it had witnessed. It seemed impossible that the story could be true, but my foot kicked something hard, beneath the layer of last year's leaves, and a cartridge-clip, rusty, yet recognisable, gleamed amongst the brown rubbish carpet of the earth.

Following the ascent of the mountain, the way was quite easy, and led through a beautifully wild and rugged country. The day was splendid, the weather glorious, and we found the exercise very exhilarating. This kind of marching was truly enjoyable. Violets grew profusely, on the sides of the narrow trail and Madame gathered a bouquet for her hair, the flowers showing quaintly, against her mannish costume. Birds sang, and the world was so gay one found it difficult to believe that men were killing each other, perhaps not so many miles away.

The trail wound around mountain-spurs, and over stretches of moor-land, mostly under cultivation, the property of the neighbouring villages. These outlying fields are visited only at the planting and the harvest times, however, and we met nobody. Several times, though, we passed the houses that are used when the villagers work in the fields, rough, comfortless dwellings, at best, built of stone and unsmoothed logs, not always chinked.

On every side loomed the masses of the mountain ranges which rise from this portion of the Balkan peninsula like rows of spines on a porcupine's back. Far off, behind us, I could make out the line of hills beyond Gherman, where we had had the fights, and in advance of us, Madame pointed out to me a dim blue line on the horizon, which was the Bulgarian frontier range. Other mountains soared up between, a ragged, unbroken succession of blue and brown peaks, streaked with parti-coloured stones and green patches of forest and grass. I saw one mountain that looked as if it contained a great vein of dull red copper on its flank.

A mountain that towered miles away from us was crowned by a mass of rock like a ruined castle. I have never seen anything so complete. Keep,

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battlements, turrets, curtain towers, punctured by the holes of time and conquerors—all were there. It looked so real that I would not believe, for some time, that we were gazing at one of nature's tricks. Again, what seemed to be a mighty cathedral reared itself between us and the sunset, its pinnacles and spires tinted a delicate rose-pink, which softened the severe lines of the grey granite. Could it be one of those historic monastery-churches, which have outlasted the centuries in the war-swept Balkans? But I was doomed to disappointment; it was another freak of nature.

Soon, the trail left the moors, and climbed upward again. Madame tripped along as carelessly as the rest. Evening was drawing nearer, and we pressed the pace. At six o'clock, we paused on the top of a mountain, for supper, which consisted of the last fragments of the goat, a few crumbs of black bread, and apples. It was growing very cold, and we did not stop any longer than we could help. The sick chetnik began to give out, at this point, and from that time on, he lagged behind the main body. We tried putting him on one of the horses, but the cold gripped him so that he could not stand it. He shivered until we feared he would drop off his horse.

Some time after seven o'clock, we crossed another of those broad stretches of moor-land and emerged upon the summit of a second mountain, the highest in the vicinity, from which we could make out the Vale of Rhodope far below, dotted with clusters of lights. It was the same mountain I had stood on, weeks before, listening to the popping of the Mausers in the same valley, and wondering if, after all, a chetnik's life was worth sampling. On the opposite side of the valley, in a cleft of the hills, was an isolated bunch of lights, which, Nicola whispered, was Granitza.

As it was so early—not yet eight o'clock—we halted to give the Turks a chance to go to bed. Strict silence was enjoined, now. A noise will carry a phenomenal distance in the mountains, and we could not afford to take extra risks. All this time it had been growing colder. The cold had that biting nip to it, which is the sure sign of winter. It precluded any attempts to sleep. One tried—one tried, desperately—for the afternoon's march had been wearisome, but it was useless. I doubled up under a bush, pushing myself among the branches for shelter from the cruel wind, and after a quarter of an hour, I had to get to my feet and dance a lusty jig, to keep the blood circulating.

An hour's rest was as much as anybody could stand, and before the evening was old we commenced the descent of the mountain. Fallen logs crisscrossed, and tangled piles of underbush barred the way. How the ponies did it, I cannot imagine. They were embarrassing, though, because they were so noisy. Madame Bojova was ever in the lead, making it a point to remove any obstructions she came to, with a ready word of encouragement for the weary men who followed her. She was a wonder. Twice, she caught her foot in treacherous roots, that twined below the rank grass-tops, and fell full length. I knew what that meant, for I did it rather often, myself. Each time she fell, she laughed.

About ten o'clock, we halted in a glade at the foot of the mountain, to let the patrol pass by. In the centre of the glade was a tall tree, with overhanging branches under which we lay. The minutes came and went. Finally, we distinguished faintly, the familiar sounds of the marching askares; they drew nearer. There were the clash of arms, the chanting of voices, the forlorn shrieks of the sentinels, and the barking of the dogs, the column roused in its passage. Then it passed, and the noises died away up the valley towards Granitza.

The trail now led across a field covered with short, coarse grass, slippery with dew, but fairly level. The moonlight shone brightly on us, and in the absence of any protecting shadows, we cast fearsome glances to left and right, as we scuttled for the trees. Who knows what a bush or boulder may conceal? A rustling of the pine-trees edging the field was sufficient to cause all, except the ponies, to drop to the ground, and such of us as still carried rifles unlocked the hammers. The Drama chetniks had only revolvers.

CHAPTER XXI

BULGARIA AT LAST

BUT we had shied at a phantom; the noise was merely the recreant wind, toying with the tree-boughs, and we pressed on. We were marching at our fastest pace, so we did not feel the cold. From the country around us came the night-sounds of its life—the tinkle of cow-bells, the barking of dogs, and sometimes, a low clamour that was made up of indistinct human voices. I began to recognise signs that I had seen in crossing the frontier into Macedonia.

Threading our way through a grove of trees, we came to the creaky bridge which we had crossed in fear and trembling, on that previous occasion, and as the first board sagged under foot, I remembered how the pack-pony had splashed the water of the ford, after we had gone to the trouble of sending him that way, to avoid his making unnecessary noise. This time, we let the horses take the bridge, like the rest of us. The moonlit glades looked just as they did the first

time I saw them, and we breathed sighs of relief when we emerged onto the forest-clad slopes of the frontier mountains. At least, there was cover, here.

For three hours, we climbed the mountains, aiming for the frontier, in a wide circle around Granitza. At the end of this time, we knew we must be across the line, but Nicola had lost the trail. We found it hard to believe. What, Nicola the Courier, the most skilful guide on the whole frontier, losing the trail from his native village to Logina! But it was true. He was lost; he did not know which way to turn.

In this case, it was dangerous to continue, when we might lose our sense of direction, and head back across the line, perhaps into the arms of the waiting askares. So we halted, in a clearing, while Nicola tried to pick up the Logina trail. We felt the cold, more than ever. It was terrible. And we could not get away from it. We had met an enemy against whom we had no defence. Madame shivered and laughed with the rest of us, and helped us in the manufacture of bad jokes, in which we did a thriving trade, hoping thereby to keep our spirits somewhere near normal.

“Nay studaino” (“it isn’t cold”), insisted Madame, whereat we chuckled, shiveringly, and

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pretended to warm our hands at a fire. It was not pleasant, though, to reflect that at any moment we might be surprised by a frontier patrol; the Turks had a pernicious habit of making unexpected investigations of their frontier territory, at unholy hours of the day or night. Once in a while, Nicola would whistle to us softly, and we would move off into the gloom, picking a way through the mess of underbrush and fallen trunks, toward the spot from which the noise came.

It was nearly morning when he found the missing path and before finding it, we had to follow a whimsical sort of an imitation thoroughfare that twisted along the frontier, now on one side, and now on the other. For a few minutes we would be in Macedonia, and then we would enjoy a brief visit in Bulgaria. The cold increased persistently. Wherever there was water, ice formed thickly. The thermometer was very near zero, so near it, in fact, that it prevented snow. But the straw that cracked the camel's hump was an intimation from Nicola that we had wandered so far from Granitza that it would be best to push on to Logina without halting. It seemed downright cruel to be deprived of the rest we had anticipated.

The horses, which had been the main stumbling-



A GROUP OF INSURGENTS.

They have the revolutionary slogan, "Liberty or Death," on their caps.

block to rapid progress, were becoming tired, and at intervals one of them would lie down, and refuse to get up until he had rested. They stumbled frequently, and made the forest ring with the crash of falling logs and boulders, rooted out of their beds into the depths of ravines. If it had not been for the horses, we should not have had to make so wide a detour around Granitza, and would not have lost the trail.

Once, Madame and I lost the rest of the party in the wilderness. We did not know what to do, but pressed on in the direction we thought the cheta had taken, calling and whistling, heedless of noise, in our panic. After half an hour, we heard Nicola's voice, and fifteen minutes later stumbled into a clearing, in which sat the others, as exhausted as we were. There could be no rest, and we marched wearily on, as fast as we could.

As the east was reddening palely, we stepped out into a valley, which was evidently used as a pasture, judging from the hay-stacks that dotted it. From these stacks we knew that we must be in Bulgaria, and not far from an inhabited district. It was now reasonable to suppose that we were safe from molestation, so Nicola consented to camp in the pasture beside the stream that

babbled down its centre, vanishing into the black mouth of a ravine which led in the direction of Logina and Sofia.

With the hay and some wood we gathered hastily, we built a fire, striving eagerly to get the closest to the welcome flames. Not until we had fairly singed our garments were we satisfied. Then we pulled hay from the stacks, and made ourselves beds, but still we had no comfort until the sun rose.

We rested in the pasture for two hours, and at the end of that time resumed our march up the ravine towards Logina. It was a bright cold day. There was a promise of snow in the air, but the sun neutralised the frostiness of the atmosphere, and in spite of our desperate night march, we all felt quite capable of doing an average day's work. Madame Bojova was no exception. There were a couple of faint lines in her pale face, but otherwise, she showed no traces of fatigue, and carolled a gay song of freedom and warfare, such as the chetniks love.

The pass we traversed led through the heart of the mountains. Peaks leaped almost vertically into the air, at either hand, dark green with the Balkan fir and pines. The way was level, following the course of the stream I have mentioned,

which, frozen over in quiet reaches, at times, ventured to clatter in a silver torrent along its boulder-strewn bed. The rocks, and even the trees, were whitened by the hoar-frost.

An hour later we came to a log cabin, before which stood a surly group of Pomaks. Shortly, we came to other huts, at the doors of which stood groups of men, who watched us curiously—particularly, Madame. If they were Bulgarians, they greeted us, and begged us to come in and let them feed us. At eleven o'clock, we reached the camp of Spass Arizonoff, where we had stopped on the way to Macedonia, and we could not refuse his hearty invitation. To begin with, he gave us the stream that flowed by his door as a wash-basin, afterwards a meal of hot milk and white bread—real white bread that we had not tasted since leaving Bulgaria—and, finally, choice between the bunks in his shack and the hillside behind the house, for a nap.

Having had acquaintance with the permanent inhabitants of Spass Arizonoff's bunks, I preferred the sun-warmed grass of the hillside, and in the course of an hour of unbroken sleep, I forgot my disappointment at our inability to secure a comfortable lodging in Granitza. Logina, it seemed, must be almost at hand. Indeed, it was

only a matter of twenty miles away. After the nap, we started. Just as we were leaving camp, a party of Bulgarian forestry officials clattered in. They hailed us eagerly, and inquired for the news across the frontier. Like all Bulgarian officials, they were exceedingly kind to us, and shut their eyes to the rifles we carried. I suppose they told themselves that there were bears in the forest.

The remainder of the long, long journey to Logina need not be described. It was of a piece with various similar accomplishments. Suffice it to say, that within two hours after leaving the camp of Spass Arizonoff, we were worn out again. Our stamina had gone, and the strain was beginning to tell; we had had no adequate rest, remember, for almost two days. We did not notice what we passed. We simply tramped on, pulling up one foot after the other, because we recognised, dumbly, that it was necessary to do so, to reach Logina—Logina, where there would be beds and food and soap.

The marvellous kaleidoscope of a Bulgarian highway passed by us, all but unnoticed: Pomaks in their gaudy costumes; lumbering ox-wains; stray foresters, with the royal lion on their caps; cavalcades of horsemen; strings of pack-ponies; goods caravans, reeking with all the colour,

as well as the odours, of Asia. They passed us by, and we did not notice them—except, perhaps, to answer the sidelong looks of hatred from the Pomaks, with like expressions of ill-will. An old gypsy woman, bent double over a smoky fire, called to me once, I remember. It was in a dingy pass; late afternoon had settled on the hills, and the gypsy band were camping by the roadside. I remember the incident, because, for some unfathomable reason, I half turned to approach her, and the men marching with me grasped my hands, muttering to me to hurry, that it was not good to speak with gypsies.

At sunset, Madame, Zankoff, and I found ourselves on the summit of a hill, from which we could see, very faint, at the opposite end of a seemingly endless valley, the smoke of Logina. How happy we felt, at the sight! Madame's feet were hurting her, and she took off her sandals, marching through the dust in her stockings. She had deep black circles under her eyes, and cheerfully admitted when she was pressed, that she was "molcho bullilee" ("a little tired"). My sandal was worn through.

On the road below, we were passed by a gang of Macedonian peasants, immigrating into Bulgaria in search of work. They greeted us heartily,

as they swung along, but they positively refused to believe that I was not as good a Bulgar as the best of them. When, a mile farther on, we came to a few scattered houses, and saw a large village ahead of us, we thought surely it must be Logina. But a gendarme, who stepped out into the roadway, magnificent in great-coat, sword, and revolver, told us it was Barna; Logina was yet forty-five minutes' walk distant. He explained the presence of a number of other gendarmes, saying that they were surrounding the Turkish quarter, in which, it was reported, were hidden a band of Albanian brigands.

I have forgotten to say that the sick man was dropped by the wayside, some miles back, beyond the mountain. He would not ride, and as it was a civilised, policed part of the country, we left him. None of the cheta was in a condition to care for another. On our arrival at Logina, we had a party sent after him.

Everything in Barna looked very Western. In some places there were sidewalks, the stores had show windows, and the gendarmes gave one a feeling of security. These same gendarmes were kind enough to say nothing about the rifles we carried, in direct violation of the principality's laws. As for the highroad to Logina, it was like the Via

Roma for straightness, and Broadway is not more level. It was actually lined by telegraph poles, too.

A few paces outside Logina, we met a party of women in Western dress. They were going by, when one shrieked suddenly, and caught Madame Bojova in her arms. Then the brave little chetnik girl showed that she was a thorough woman, after all, for she did her best to gather all three in her arms at once, and she cried with them, hysterically, and kissed them. One was a Mlle. Vassilioff, whom I had met when I was in Logina, before. At last, we managed to tear Madame away, and she tramped on with us, in her torn, stocking-feet, wiping her eyes, and protesting that we must think her a great baby.

Turning a blind corner, we were confronted by a ditch, and of course, I nearly plunged in. In the wall, to the left, was a gateway—the Hotel Makedonia. Our journey was ended. We had marched the entire sixty miles from Kovatchavishta in forty-two hours. I say sixty miles, but it must have been considerably more, for we did not march in a straight line, and the continual ascents of mountains, not to speak of the difficult nature of the trail, for two-thirds of the distance, aggravated the hardships of the undertaking.

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I should like to linger over my description of the wondrous feast concocted for us by Giorgi, the inn-keeper, that night. It was served in the back-room of the hotel, where we all sat about a long table, and the other guests peered through the doorway on the dirty chetniks, who made merry over what was, when one came right down to facts, no more than a passable meal. It was the best we had eaten in months, though.

The next day was Sunday. I had been so long following the chetnik trail, which knows no artificial distinctions between the several days of the week, that I had lost track of the recurrence of Sunday. I knew it ought to happen once a week, but I really could n't remember which day was the first. As rural Bulgaria is inclined to be religious on the Sabbath, it was thought best to delay our continuation of the journey to Sofia, until Monday. In the meantime, we profited by the delay to have baths, and consulted the barber, both very necessary precautions. My sandals were worn out completely, and I was overjoyed to find a pair of shoes, which I had left behind me, carefully stowed away in a closet by the thrifty Giorgi. Giorgi, by the way, was immensely proud that I had remembered his name. He swaggered through the town, recounting the fact to all who

would listen, and I was readily given anything I demanded in his hostelry.

All phases of life must come to an end, and it was with unaffected regret that I drove away from Logina on Monday morning. Madame and wall-eyed Bob and one of the chetniks were with me, and a goodly portion of Logina came to see us off. They thronged the sidewalk in front of the Hotel Makedonia, and overflowed to the gutters, all the way out of town, shouting "Viva," as we trotted past, and waving their handkerchiefs or caps. Good, kind-hearted people of Logina! They were honestly sorry I was going away; big, burly Nicola stood in the front rank, with tears in his eyes, calling me brot, and begging me to write to him from America. And this was Nicola the Courier, the fierce, savage eater of babes and slayer of women—according to the Pomak tales!

But the phaeton whisked around a corner in the road, and Logina sank into nothingness, in the hard grey winter horizon. All the rest of the journey, we raced with another phaeton, carrying a senior cadet of the Military School, at Sofia, back to his lessons; and half-way through the wild pass that led to the Maritza plain, across the mountains, we came up with a third phaeton,

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containing a major of infantry and his old mother, likewise bound for Sofia. At Sarambey, a small town on the railroad, which we reached early in the afternoon, we had a light luncheon, and then all boarded the train for Sofia—the Constantinople–Vienna express, twenty miles an hour, stopping at every hay-stack, but equipped with corridor cars and steam heat. Three days before, we had been in the Middle Ages.

Fortunately, the commissionaire of the hotel was waiting on the platform at Sofia, when the train came in. He knew me. How or why he knew me is beyond comprehension, for I was clad in the ragged remnants of my revolutionary uniform, and even in the hodge-podge of Sofia, I was curious to look upon—not to say, distinctive. Under the chaperonage of the commissionaire, I was escorted to the hotel, and treated to a warm bath and clean clothes, and a supper by a French chef—from which it will be seen that I was gradually running up the scale of luxury.

After supper, I set out for the Restaurant Balkan, to find my friends of the Committee. But it was late, and they had gone. I had messages for the Sofia organisation, and I could not afford to let them wait, so I walked around to the Café Makedonia, where most of the famous fighting

voivodes put up, when they were in town. And here luck was with me, for in a corner was that bearded prince of good fellows, Peter Popasoff, Treasurer of the Organisation, friend of Sandansky and leader of the fighting faction.

Popasoff was sitting in a secluded corner, writing, with a circle of voivodes surrounding him. He leaped to his feet when I entered, and embraced me.

"After you did not return in two weeks," he said, "I made up my mind you would never return."

The succeeding days were busy ones for me—busy, but monotonous. Only one event stands out as interesting.

On the last day of my stay in Sofia, Popasoff told me that he had been asked by the voivodes to bring me to dinner that night. The voivodes had a mess of their own, in a private room of the Café Battenburg, where they met every evening to talk over matters, and discuss ways and means for carrying on the revolution in the future. In a way, it was a secret gathering, but like all things that go on in Sofia, it was known to the police.

Popasoff hinted that there was a surprise in store for me. To all inquiries, however he sustained a grinning silence, and I had, perforce, to

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get what satisfaction I could from speculation. At half-past six we started from the Café Macedonia, pausing at the entrance to read the bulletin-boards. In big black type, the headlines said "Sandansky's presence in Sofia reported by Turkish Agent. Request made for his arrest." Popasoff chuckled.

At the Café Battenburg, we were guided through the tangle of tables, to a stairway at the rear, in the thickness of the wall. This stairway twisted round and round on itself, and ultimately brought us, unawares, into a long, low room, overhanging the public café, from which came the tinkle of the glasses, the music of the orchestra, and the people's voices, refined and softened by distance and the curtains which shut us in. A table ran down the middle, with almost every chair occupied. The men who filled the seats were tall, limber fellows, hairy, bearded to the eyes, usually, and hard as nails, with that keenness of glance which comes from a life in the open, where ability to see means everything. At the head, sat the most picturesque man of the company.

He was not very tall, but his broad shoulders and well-proportioned frame made him look extremely powerful. His hair was a reddish



MARIA LOUISA STREET, SOFIA'S PRINCIPAL BUSINESS THOROUGHFARE.

The old mosque has been turned into a public bath.

shade, as was his rough beard, and his eyes had a strange wild light in them that gave his face a cynical air at times. Yet those same eyes could kindle with the light of kindness, and there was no mistaking the whole-hearted friendship of his hearty grip.

"Sandansky," said Popasoff, introducing us.

Yani Sandansky rose to his feet, courteously, and stood until I was seated. So this was Sandansky, I said to myself. The great Sandansky, kidnapper of Miss Stone, the man upon whose head two governments had set a price, the man who had more enemies and more devoted friends, than any other in the Balkans. At that very moment, Sandansky was proscribed in Bulgaria—had been since the Stone episode. I had heard much concerning him, much that was unfavourable, and much, too, that tended to make him a demi-god. It has always been my personal opinion that Sandansky was more sinned against, than sinning. Certainly, by the poor Bulgarian peasants, he was fairly idolised.

During the several hours which I had to observe him, he showed to remarkably good effect. He was polite, talkative, and friendly. There was constantly about him, though, that weird, wild look of the eyes which, when it was caught

unawares, seemed almost insane. I could not fathom it; I have not been able to fathom it, to this day. But it was there. It made you feel uncanny, like looking into something mysterious, you knew you had no right to see. Perhaps, I have thought, sometimes, it was the clue to Sandansky, to all the bloody deeds charged against him by his enemies; perhaps it was the cause of the assassination of Sarafoff and Garvanoff, a month later. I have often wondered.

At ten o'clock, Popasoff and I left. We picked our way through a network of narrow lanes, into Targovska Ulitza Street, heading for the Palace Square. Sofia is not a riotous city, but it was unusually quiet that night. We wondered at it, and commented on the fact. There were an extraordinary number of gendarmes in evidence, also. One of them spoke to us gruffly, at the corner of Maria Louisa Street, and told us to hurry on. My companion had half a mind to turn back; but I dissuaded him.

"There is something in the wind," he asserted. "I am sure some plot is brewing."

Passing under the Palace walls, by the guard-house, we gained the hotel, and I strolled a few feet toward the War Ministry, with my friend, preparatory to bidding him good-night. Sud-

denly, in the quiet of the night, we heard a clanking of arms and the tramp of marching men, up a street at one side of the War Ministry. One never knows what may happen in Sofia, and it is best, on general principles, to be cautious. So we ducked into the darkened vestibule of the Café Bulgaria. The tramping and clanking drew nearer; an officer muttered an order; other officers repeated it; and a column of the Royal Guard, dismounted, swept around the corner, sabres jingling musically. Their Männlicher carbines, slanted at one angle over their shoulders, caught the rays from the electric lamp on the corner, in an iridescent wave of sparkling light.

Soundless, save for the jingling of the sabres and the stamping of the hundreds of boots, the column disappeared in the shadows under the Palace wall, to reappear again, in the square beyond, a forest of tall eagle's feathers, flowing rhythmically through the night. We turned simultaneously to each other. What was afoot? From streets to the right and left came other sounds of marching men. We investigated, stealthily creeping through the shadows of the Public Gardens. To our right, infantry were moving toward the old quarter of the town; a force of

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gendarmes was executing a like manœuvre, a block to the left.

It was useless for us to try to do anything, now. The movement, whatever its purpose, was too far under way to be stopped by the efforts of a couple of men, ignorant even of the proper way to direct their exertions. So we did the wisest thing under the circumstances—we went to bed. We did n't sleep; I awoke at an unheard-of hour the next morning, and demanded information from the concierge. He did not have to be pressed.

“Such a happening!” he bubbled, in his Austrian-English with a dash of French. “Such a happening! It is well m’sieur was not with his revolution friends last night. Sandansky was in the city and the police and soldiers made for to ar-rr-rrest (Carl rolled his r’s frightfully) him, but he would not be overcome. It is said that he slew seven, and made his escape. Tchut, a terrible fellow, m’sieur, a terrible fellow. A brigand, m’sieur, no less! There is no knowing how many murders he has on his conscience. They do say, m’sieur”—Carl grew confidential, at this point, and his voice sank to a whisper—“that he is blood-crazy. He has shed so much blood, he craves it; he cannot live without it. They say he cannot sleep, and

his familiar spirit is always with him. He has the evil eye, m'sieur. Ugh, a terr-rr-ible fellow!"

I found that Carl's account was somewhat exaggerated. A friend, whom I prevailed upon to decipher the Cyrillic characters of an early newspaper, told me the true story of the raid. Part of it, he gained from the printed narrative, and part from the town gossip, which, for good reasons, was not printed.

It seems that the Turkish spies had discovered Sandansky's presence in Sofia, and had lodged the information, together with unimpeachable evidence, with the authorities, calling upon them to arrest the brigand, for whose capture the Bulgarian government had offered a reward. The last thing in the world the Bulgarian government desired was to arrest Sandansky; he was too big a man to be arrested, and besides, his arrest would disturb the revolutionary propaganda, thereby assisting Turkey. But there was no dodging the information lodged by the Turkish agent.

The device hit on by the clever Bulgars was a regular house-to-house search, the quarry having been warned before hand. A cordon was thrown around the quarter in which Sandansky was hiding, but before it was complete a gendarme

went in and warned him to leave. Then, the Bulgarian government folded its hands, resignedly, and said "Well, we can't help it if he was too smart for us, you know. We can't; really, we can't. You ought not to expect the superhuman from us. We made a thorough search, and he got away from us by his diabolical trickery. That was all." Without doubt, the Bulgars held the trumps in that particular game.

Sandansky escaped, to plan the killing of Boris Sarafoff and Ivan Garvanoff, two of the members of the Committee of Three, who were inimical to his plans. He did not kill them, himself, but it is indisputable that the man who did kill them, Nicola Panitza, was his lieutenant. I knew Panitza in Sofia, and never expected him to fall so low. With his chief, he escaped to Macedonia, and is living, to-day, I believe, in the raon of Drama, of which he was voivode.

CHAPTER XXII

SOME HISTORY AND A FEW POSSIBILITIES

THE "Bulgarian atrocities" of 1875 centred the attention of Europe on the Balkans. There had been previous instances of murder and rapine, on a wholesale scale, in the Sultan's dominions, but the awful slaughter at the village of Batak, not far from the town of T'Barzardjeck, was the culmination of all. It was more than the world could stand, and within a few months, the regiments of the Czar were pouring across the Pruth, and the thunders of cannon awakened the echoes of the Rhodope passes.

Plevna fell, after one of the most heroic defences in history; nothing could stand before the victorious Russians. They took Adrianople, and the road to Constantinople was open to them; their battalions were in position on the Bosphorus. It seemed as if no power could prevent the absorption of European Turkey by the "Colossus of the North." Then England stepped forward.

It is difficult, nowadays, to realise the heat of

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resentment and nervous dread, with which the English people watched Russia's final succession of triumphs. Englishmen saw Constantinople turned into a Russian outpost, the Mediterranean a Russian lake, the road to India threatened. Led by Disraeli, a strong war-party dominated the nation's councils. English warships were ordered through the Dardanelles, and notice was served on Russia that she must be prepared to remit her demands. For a span of hours, the peace of the world hung by a hair.

In the end, Russia backed down. The Treaty of San Stefano, dictated by Russian might, at the gates of the Ottoman capital, was abrogated, and Bismarck summoned the Congress of Berlin to consider an entire rearrangement of Balkan affairs. It is not necessary to deal at length with the results of the Congress. Its definite result, and the one for which Disraeli and the British public strove, was to check the Russian advance on the Mediterranean. There were several minor results, as well. One of these was the creation of a semi-independent Bulgaria, which has grown with the years, waxing powerful, until now it has definitely cast off the tutelage of the Sultan, and set for itself a separate path to follow.

To be sure, the Treaty of San Stefano likewise



THE ROYAL PALACE, SOFIA.

created Bulgaria. Indeed, it created a Bulgaria much larger than was permitted by Disraeli, who saw in such a state nothing more than a buffer for Russia, a footstool to climb upon in order to make easier a second advance upon Constantinople. Realising that he could not demand too much from Russia, Disraeli did not insist on the absolute abolition of the tentative state; he simply, as he thought, made it harmless, by reducing it to a petty principality that could never amount to anything.

That was one of the great Jew's few mistakes. Had he been able to look forward and see the restless nationalistic spirit of Bulgaria, straining at the bonds of the burdensome treaty, he would not have worried so much about its possible destiny. A Bulgaria for the Bulgarians, he never dreamed of. How could even he have looked forward, across the decades, and seen another youthful old race, by the shores of the Yellow Sea, checkmating the forces of the Czar?

The Treaty of Berlin established the Bulgarians of Bulgaria in a liberty probably as liberal as that enjoyed by any other Continental race. Their education, their advancement, and gradual construction of a national culture were assured. But what of their brethren, two and a half

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millions strong, on the opposite side of the Rhodopes, in Macedonia; and what of the third branch of the race, in Eastern Roumelia? The last half of that question has been answered. In 1885, Eastern Roumelia revolted against the Sultan, and joined Bulgaria, of which it has since formed an integral portion. Russia frowned on the affair and withdrew her support, but Turkey refused to fight, and when Servia interfered she was soundly whipped for her pains.

But what of the Macedonian Bulgars? What have they done? How have they advanced themselves in the quarter century during which their brethren have been making themselves at least a moderate force in the councils of Europe? How have they improved their learning? Have they done aught for the betterment of the world at large? Have they written any books worth while? Have they done anything, accomplished any of the things an enlightened nation counts as honourable to it?

And the answer to all these questions must be in the negative. They have accomplished nothing, because they have had no opportunities. While Bulgaria has been advancing, step by step, Macedonia has been lying dormant mentally,

although at spasmodic intervals she has seethed fiercely in a vague longing for liberty.

About fifteen years ago, this longing for freedom and release from oppression, first began to manifest itself, in a physical sense. I say fifteen years ago, but it is not easy to place the date exactly. At any rate, about fifteen years ago a little knot of Macedonian exiles, including the two Tartartcheffs and some others, a few of whom are alive to-day, founded the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee. For five years they accomplished nothing, but in 1898, or thereabouts, a campaign of aggression, or, more properly speaking, armed resistance, was resorted to.

That was the actual beginning of the Macedonian Revolution, which was waged over a considerable part of European Turkey for ten years. Very shortly, the Greeks and the Servians became alarmed at the progress of the Bulgarian revolt. It is not too much to say that they were as much alarmed as the Turks. They saw in it an intrigue on the part of the Bulgarian Government, aiming to lead to the forcible expulsion of the Turks and annexation. The idea of such a destiny for Macedonia was extremely painful to Greeks and Servians, for both have aspirations in regard to it.

Quietly, without any especial efforts at attract-

ing attention, Greek and Servian chetas began slipping across the Macedonian frontier. Wherever they went, they left a wide track of bloodshed and ruin behind them. The men they killed were seldom Turks, and the houses they burned were rarely owned by Mohammedans. No. They were after the Bulgarians. In place of the two-sided war that had been, there were four different parties fighting.

Most of the time, three of these parties assailed the odd one, the Bulgarians. Occasionally, to vary the monotony of the work, the Greeks and Serbs fought among themselves. The Turks, perceiving how nicely fate had stacked the cards in their favour, sat back and watched the Christian factions claw each other. It was, in truth, a pretty picture—three Christian races, all of them oppressed and down-trodden, squabbling among themselves, for fear that they might not get the dead man's clothes. That is not an attractive simile, but it just expresses their mental attitude.

From the Ægean Sea to the Bulgarian frontier, Macedonia became a roaring furnace of revolt, in which human life was regarded as too trivial for consideration. In the year 1903, the Bulgarians made their great effort. Chetas were concentrated on the Bulgarian side of the line,

and the Macedonian villagers were prepared to rise. At the last minute, something went wrong. Several thousand men were thrown into the field, and reinforcements were forced over the frontier at a number of points, but the Turks had no trouble in crushing the chetniks when they tried ambitious manœuvres. There were not enough of the Bulgars to oppose the thousands of askares, who were rushed from all points of the Turkish Empire.

After 1903, the revolt languished, bursting out, at irregular intervals in different localities, and varied, as I have said, by the bitter warfare of the rival races. In the last year or two, I believe, the Greek and Serb propagandas gained an appreciable amount of ground. The Greeks are the wealthiest of the Balkan nations and the Greek merchants did not hesitate to pour their gold into Macedonia, seeing in its acquisition a good chance to build up their trade. Servia is poor, compared to Greece, but the Servian Government spent large sums of money in proselyting and sending armed chetas through the north-western part of Macedonia.

Fortunately, in the summer of 1908, came the overturn of the reactionary party in Turkey, by the Young Turks, and the establishment of

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constitutional government. This new complication gave the Macedonians a breathing spell—a breathing spell which bids fair to last for some time to come. But that it will continue indefinitely, none can believe who knows the country intimately.

Perhaps few Macedonians themselves know exactly what they want. They can frame their desires roughly, but they have always been so far from actual attainment that they have not devoted much thought to the future. The present has been with them, covering them like a huge red pall of unrest. They have had to think of their lives, of the lives of their families and friends. Property has never been safe; the visits of the tax-collectors have invariably meant extortion and graft. Poor people, they have not known which way to turn. Badgered, down-trodden, shut out from the world's mercies, abused for their religion, they revolted. They turned on their oppressors, snarling.

What a pity it was that after this the spark of national ambition could not have been nursed into a flame of patriotism, rising supreme above the differences of race and creed. Had that been accomplished, one might picture a Macedonia ultimately free and independent, a sovereign,

autonomous state. As it is, I fear that that can never be.

Macedonia is not likely, however, to remain for long a part of the Turkish Empire. Sooner or later the blow will fall, and she will be separated—but how? Could the small Balkan states, for once, settle their petty differences, their trivial squabbles and jealousies, and join forces, there is little doubt that they could accomplish the desired end. But that is a castle in Spain which would not look real, even in a dream.

“East is East and West is West,
And never the twain shall meet.”

says Kipling. Also, it is written in the Book of Things that no two men of different races in the Balkans shall agree.

From an unbiassed standpoint, the most likely inheritor of Macedonia is Bulgaria, partly because people of Bulgarian stock form the majority of the population, and partly because Bulgaria is the strongest of the Balkan countries. When the question of the disposition of Macedonia comes before Europe, I imagine it will be a case of the strongest claimant getting the prize. So fixed is this idea in the head of the average Bulgarian, that every officer in the army has a smattering

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of Turkish, and there are men attached to each battalion, who are intimately acquainted with the terrain across the frontier and the strategical lay of the land.

I was ushered into a small room, in the War Ministry at Sofia, on the wall of which hung a large map of Macedonia, showing every elevation of land, every gulley, trail, and village, and this map was covered with little flags on pins, showing the locations of the detachments of Turkish troops. These flags were changed from day to day—almost from hour to hour. At a minute's notice, the two officers in this room could have told their chief the position of any particular company of askares.

One finds this aggressive sentiment widespread throughout all classes of Bulgarian society; the people are anxious to annex Macedonia; they do not look with favour upon the idea of adding another to the group of more or less innocuous Balkan states. Why not construct a country that will be a country? they say. Why not build up a Bulgaria which can demand, and keep, a place in the forefront of the nations? Yet among these people there is no very strong desire to grab the whole of Macedonia. They are in favour of being just to their rivals. According



THE NATIONAL THEATRE, SOFIA.

On the left is part of the façade of the Ministry of War.

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to their opinion, Greece should be given the territory north of her present frontier, to within a reasonable distance of Salonica and Monastir. I do not think you can find a Bulgar who would consent to give up these two cities to any other claimant. Servia would be handed over the sandjak of Novi Bazar, and the district known as Old Servia. The rest, remarks the Bulgar, complacently, should go to Bulgaria.

As to the justice of this, one must decide in accordance with one's lights. Whether, given possession of Macedonian territory, Bulgaria would live up to previous vague half-promises, is equally a disputable question. Certainly, the Greeks and Servians refuse to place faith in such assertions. The greatest pity of all, is the inability of the three races to join forces. If they could—but it is useless to discuss "ifs."

The outsider who visits the Balkans, and tries to gain an unprejudiced viewpoint, from which to gaze over the situation, cannot help feeling influenced by Bulgaria's position. Bulgaria's claim on Macedonia is based chiefly on the ground of population. "Give us the Bulgarians," is the demand of Sofia. "Let the Greeks have the Greeks and the Serbs have the Serbs."

That is all very well, but how are you going to

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decide exactly who are Greeks, or Serbs, or Bulgars? While in this chapter I have spoken of broad geographical lines, there is no doubt in my mind that a strict division of the land on such principles would visit much hardship upon thousands of peasants. The hopeless tangle of races baffles one at every turn. For there are Greeks in the Bulgarian area, and Bulgars in the Greek area, and both are scattered through Old Servia.

A Bulgarian politician, who was more broad-minded than many of his countrymen, told me he thought the best solution of the Macedonian question was a provisional government by a group of the great powers, pending acquirement of a sufficient education by the Macedonians to enable them to govern themselves. This idea has attractions, but it is open to criticism, on the ground that it would merely result in the addition of another infant country to the already crowded Balkan nursery.

Every plan for the future of Macedonia that has been advanced can be riddled with objections. You cannot propose one that will meet with the approval of the entire mass of people interested. But you can propose a plan that will gain the assent of the majority of the population of Mace-

donia itself, and it seems as if, when all is said and done, perhaps that is the ideal thing to do. It is impossible to prophesy. We must wait for the future to show its hand.

Personally, I am rather prejudiced in favour of the Bulgars. They are a likable people, and when they want a thing, they bend their efforts to the task of procuring that one thing, with a bulldog tenacity of grip that is Anglo-Saxon in its intensity. They are not perfect, by any means; they have their sins, as well as other races. In their political morals, I am sorry to say, they are apt followers of America. Yet they are individually honest and industrious, brave, hospitable, and unselfish.

It is curious to note the growth of socialism in Bulgaria and Macedonia. As soon as the younger generation secure the rudiments of a modern education, they usually become ardent Socialists. Like most suffering races, the gospel of universal brotherhood appeals to them. They think, if it could be founded in their midst it would be a panacea for every ill they suffer from.

Indubitably, Socialism has had its place in the development of the Bulgars, but one cannot help noting, with regret, its sinister concomitant—a distinct drift toward agnosticism. It seems hardly

wise that a race with years of work ahead of it, before it can gain a substantial position, should be cast adrift from the moorings of religion. However, this may be a too pessimistic remark; the vast majority of the Bulgars are simple, ardent Christians, who do not even think of questioning their creed.

What will become of the Bulgarians? How will they work out their destiny? These are the two questions of vital import the race has to confront to-day. Eminently a military people, one cannot resist the belief that whatever growth they may attain will be won by force of arms. At this date they have made themselves the strongest power in south-eastern Europe, rated as competent to whip the unwieldy Turkish Empire. They overshadow their neighbours, and they know it. They have spent their brief national life watching the drift of international politics, waiting for chances to strike lightning blows for the prestige of the Bulgar race. When the next chance comes, they will seize it—you may be sure of that.

They are old hands at these *coups-d'états*, the Bulgars. They have to their credit, already, the annexation of Eastern Roumelia, the break with Russia, and the defeat of Servia, not to speak of the seizure of the Orient Railway and

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the declaration of independence, besides many smaller matters. They will be ready for what is to come. In the meantime, they will continue building up their army to the best of their limited financial ability, so that they may always have that veiled threat to shake in Turkey's face: "We are small; we are four million souls in all; but we have 400,000 soldiers we can use at need."

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THE END

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